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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TEACHER CHANGE:
A TEACHER'S REFLECTION DURING SHARED WRITING

©

by

JOANNE EDITH MELVIN

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 1994

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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November 25, 1993

"Secrets about what has happened to the universal potential for human creativity are buried in powerful silences that are within us and in powerful silences that surround us. It is our greatest challenge as teachers, in collaboration with each other, and in collaboration with our students, to search out those secrets."

Esther S. Fine (1989, p. 508)

DEDICATION

To my husband, Chris, who keeps me laughing and loving, and has helped me in too many ways to mention;

and to

My daughters, Jennifer and Kristin, for their love, affection, and ways of reminding me of what is really most important in my life.

ABSTRACT

This case study examines the interactions between a teacher and four grade one students during Shared Writing, an instructional strategy used to teach young children how to write. A number of Shared Writing activities were observed and videotaped. Following the viewing and discussion of the videotapes with the researcher the teacher reflected on the interactions that occurred during these activities. The teacher's reflections were recorded on audiotape and in a journal, to which the researcher responded regularly. The influence of critical reflection on the the teacher's behaviours was then studied in subsequent Shared Writing episodes.

A number of field work methods and techniques were used to collect the data over a period of five weeks including direct observation, interviews, and self-observation. Through carefully and repeatedly reviewing videotapes and audiotapes, and reading the teacher's journal, the researcher looked for areas that were related, in order to identify examples of behavioural change in the teacher.

Although some behavioural change occurred following self-reflection, it was found that opportunities for further change would require investment in the complex process of reflection, time, and the seeking of support of others.

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I. Introduction and Literature Review

There is a need for research on the social interactions associated with various methods of teaching, since it has been shown that what children learn, and the kinds of thinking they will use, depend to a great extent on these interactions (Rowe, 1989).

This inquiry is a case study. Stake (1988) states, "...the case study is a study of a 'bounded system' emphasizing the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the time" (p. 258). Bolster (1983) describes such research designs as both detailed and complex and explains that, "Rather than attempting to analyze the entire classroom culture, such studies usually focus on selected aspects, though always from a holistic perspective" (p. 305).

Although many teachers in primary classrooms use Shared Writing as part of their whole language programs (Morrow & Strickland, 1990) there is little research on the social interactions that occur during its implementation. Werner (1979) referring to an ethnography of implementation contends that this type of qualitative research is not concerned with finding or defining discrepancies between what the originators intend and what actually happens in the classroom. Rather, its purpose is to describe the activities or routines used by the participants during implementation. Researchers investigate the ways teachers perceive, interpret, legitimate, and initiate new programs or methods. He states, "By observing and documenting these activities we may be able to uncover situational factors and problems which impede curricular change in schools" (p. 13).

Realizing that "people are both the creators and the products of the social situations in which they live" (Bolster, 1983, p. 303), my objective is not to generate universal propositions for predictive purposes (although the research may elicit universal propositions about teaching) but to provide a verifiable explanation of how a particular teacher implemented Shared Writing. Therefore, the knowledge gained will not be expressed as prescriptions for other teachers. Rather, my intention is to compare what a teacher did in the field with the initial intent of the Shared Writing method, to find out what kinds of interpretations a particular teacher made of theory, in relation to her own situation, not to find disparities.

By defining and examining the Shared Writing methodology in greater detail, through detailed, critical descriptions, a deeper understanding of the processes at work will be furthered. Teacher-student interactions in Shared Writing are part of a complex, dynamic system. Interrelationships among place, roles, and activities have to be considered in explaining the meaning of behaviour. Teaching cannot be viewed only in terms of teachers' influence on pupils (Bolster, 1983). Contrary to the assumptions of some researchers, teachers do not have complete control over classroom conditions (Bolster, 1983). Events arise out of multiple causes. Classrooms are complex social systems in which both direct and indirect influences operate (Bolster, 1983). Yet, teachers are required constantly to make choices regarding their own language and behaviour toward their students.

This case study will search for an understanding of the complexity of these interactions. My objective is to provide systematic and reliable information to allow teachers to shed light on their own situations and thereby aid them in decision making during their own implementation of Shared Writing.

Cairney and Langbien (1989) state, "A change in methodology, without a change in beliefs concerning the nature of the writing process, nor reflection upon the teacher's role in the writing environment, will lead to no change at all" (p. 565). In this study I guide the teacher toward critical self-reflection regarding her role during Shared Writing activities, keeping in mind Dyson's (1990) statement "...teaching and responding to children takes reflective practice" (p. 212).

In Chapter II the literature focusing on children's language learning, the relationship of social interaction to children's writing, and the Shared Writing process is reviewed. Chapter III outlines the theoretical foundation for the study, including a discussion of qualitative research, ethnography, critical theory, critical action research, and teacher change. The methodology and design of the study is explained in Chapter IV. Chapter V discusses the role of the researcher, including a statement of intentions, and a brief statement of beliefs. In Chapter VI the collected data is reported and interpreted. Further interpretation and discussion of the data, as well as a statement of the significance of the study is found in Chapter VII.

Children's Language Learning

Over the past two decades several researchers have focused on language and literacy development from a naturalistic perspective (Doake, 1981; Heath, 1982; Juliebö, 1985; Schickedanz, 1978; Taylor, 1981). These investigations have led to a philosophy of language acquisition and learning widely known as "Whole Language". This philosophical stance maintains that several processes are integrated in the course of language development (Goodman & Goodman, 1981; Halliday, 1975; John-Steiner & Tatter, 1983). Language is typically viewed as a system of meaning with language and literacy acquisition developing from the child's need to make sense of the world and to communicate understanding of it (Halliday, 1975; Wells, 1981). Children learn how to speak, read, and write because of their need to satisfy authentic personal or social interests and needs, or to accomplish specific purposes or tasks (Altwerger, Edelsky & Flores, 1987; Cazden, 1982; Shanklin, 1991; Zola, 1989). Furthermore, as children use language they naturally learn about language (Goodman, 1986; Rowe & Harste, 1986).

Social relationships determine the language patterns we develop and use. Individual cognition occurs at a social level prior to the individual level (Vygotsky, 1978). Social interactions and language are saturated with culture (Wilcox, 1982). Hence, the development of language enables the internalization of cultural knowledge (Bloome, 1985; Halliday, 1975) with the result that children not only learn language but learn through language (Calkins, 1986; Donaldson, 1978; Halliday, 1975; Lindfors, 1987). In this way cultural transmission occurs (Bernstein, 1973, 1974, 1977; Cherryholmes, 1988; McDermott, 1974; Wilcox, 1982). "Culture generates language and language regenerates the culture" (Chamberlin, 1989).

Social Interaction and Children's Writing

Teachers need to create contexts and structure environments that are conducive to, and support, children's natural language development in order that they will be able to communicate effectively with others, as well as to grow in awareness and control of their own thinking (Calkins, 1986; Corson, 1984; Donaldson,1978; Graves, 1983 Lindfors, 1987). Dyson and Genishi (1983) state that "...a primary role for teachers is to support children's use of language for reflection" (p. 754).

Although children may learn how to use language naturally , the conditions that promote this natural learning may not occur naturally in the typical classroom. Many researchers have explored the conditions that promote language learning and literacy development. Researchers agree that allowing and encouraging children to talk to one another during the various phases of writing can benefit children's development of writing abilities and promote more effective writing (Bulgarella & Long, 1985; Dyson, 1983; Dyson & Genishi, 1982; Dahl, 1988; Cazden, 1982; Kasten, 1990). By interacting with peers, children are able to explore topics and ideas for writing and are able to rely on others for information during the composing stage (Bulgarella & Long, 1985; Dahl, 1988; Dyson, 1983; Dyson & Genishi, 1982; Kasten, 1990). As stated by Kasten (1990):

> The role of oral language in the composing process is a vital one. As oral language contributes to the act of writing, it becomes a powerful learning strategy that stretches writers in ways they cannot accomplish in isolation or in silence. Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the "zone of proximal development" states that learners can do more in collaboration with peers and adults than they can by themselves. This "zone of proximal development" can be observed in the community of writers through the oral language interactions and collaborations that accompany composing. Student interactions support learning agendas, including the sharing of ideas and better use of spelling and mechanics. (p. 155-156)

Children can seek or give assistance, or model one another's behaviours, resulting in skill improvement or expanded insights into writing. As they share ideas and explain things to others, children learn more about themselves as individuals and as writers (Bulgarella & Long, 1985; Dickinson, 1986). Working together to improve the clarity and effectiveness of their writing, children learn about audiences and the importance of writing as a form of communication with others (Dahl, 1988; Dyson & Genishi, 1982; Kasten, 1990; Rowe, 1989).

Through interaction children learn to make their knowledge about language and the writing process explicit (Dickinson, 1986; Lindfors, 1987). In commenting on this development of children's "disembedded" or "reflective thought", Lindfors (1987) states:

> ...it is often in the interaction with others that the child encounters the new idea, cognitive conflict, and support. The possibilities for 'turning language and thought in upon themselves' are far greater in such interaction contexts than in the isolation of seatwork. (p. 283-284)

As children learn about language and how it works their metacognitive awareness develops (Rowe & Harste, 1986). As a result, their strategies become more efficient, resulting in better written products.

Children learn to be more critical of their own and of others' writing through interaction (Bulgarella & Long, 1985; Cazden, 1982). They learn how to express evaluations of written work in a positive way, while monitoring the production of a piece, or during the final sharing. They benefit from carefully examining the ideas and written products of others and their own. They learn to listen to others' reactions and accept others' criticisms. They are allowed the freedom to change, based on their own expanded perceptions of their work. In this way the idea of a community of learners can be fostered, as the children give support and encouragement to one another (Kasten, 1990). Britton (1985) suggests that classrooms should become communities where children interact with each other and the teacher to carry out legitimate personal and social tasks. A community attitude in the classroom helps children to feel less isolated as they learn to communicate through writing (Dyson & Genishi, 1982).

The teacher's role appears to be critical to the development of literacy (Donaldson, 1978; Graves, 1983; Moss, 1986; Pinnell, 1975). Modeling or demonstrating spoken or written language is one important way teachers facilitate children's natural learning (Cazden, 1982; Graves, 1983; Holdaway, 1979). Smith (1989) states, "Just as children model their playtime behaviour on what they see in their parents, older peers, and television role models, so they will model their early literacy behaviour on what they perceive in their environment" (p. 528). Consequently, many classroom practices reflect a focus on what adults and children do with language and emphasize the use of language.

Pinnell (1975), commenting on the use of language, states that "the key to reaching a full potential seems to lie in the values and expectations communicated by the teacher as he or she interacts with children" (p. 325). Other researchers contend that the nature of the interactions between teachers and students are particularly important in the development of children's writing (Allen & Carr, 1989; Dyson, 1983; Fine, 1989; Moss, 1986; Rowe, 1989). Moss's (1986) study of the teacher-student transactions during the writing process of kindergarten children identified the instructional decisions of the teacher as having the most important influence on writing in the classrooms.

Vygotsky (1978) contends that cognitive growth is a "profoundly social process" (p. 131) with language playing various roles in mediated learning. Through interaction, teachers and other adults actively support children's language learning. This support has been given various terms including scaffolding, conferencing, and mediation (Bruner, 1978; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Feuerstein, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978). The support comes from adult language input causing children to shift their perspectives and test their own constructed hypotheses. Bruner (cited in Searle 1984) states that the adult works to "support the child in achieving an intended outcome" (p. 480). Graves (1983) states that "scaffolding follows the contours of child growth" (p. 271). Searle (1984) states:

> ...the notion of scaffolding...should not be used to justify making children restructure their experience to fit their teachers' structures. What we should be doing, instead, is working with children, encouraging them to adapt their own language resources to achieve new purposes which they see as important. (p. 482)

Dyson and Genishi (1983) express a similar idea when they state:

> ...the very way interaction is typically structured in schools makes it difficult for many children to participate in the reflection on, and reinterpretation of, their own models of the world. Children are often limited to fitting into the teacher's interpretive context, rather than supported in creating their own. (p. 754)

Heath (1983) found that social structures and interactions influence how children perceive literacy. In some classroom situations there may be "cultural conflict" between the teacher and the child. Dyson (1990) states, "...when teachers attempt to guide children's efforts, tensions may surface--conflicts between teachers' and children's intentions and between their ways of fulfilling intentions" (p. 203).

Children's different cultural backgrounds, social understandings, and personal connections to print need to be valued (Dyson, 1990; Edelsky & Harmon, 1989; Heath, 1983).

Learning must be situated within the knowledge and discourse that students bring to school (Cazden,1988; Edelsky & Harmon, 1989; Harper, 1990; Heath, 1983; Tizard, 1984; Wells, 1981). As stated by Fine (1989):

> We all know there are no children with nothing to say. There are, however, many children who have, within the context of traditional schooling, decided that it is not worth writing or speaking thoughtfully because they do not believe that they will be heard through the barriers. Collaborative projects in which students have a guaranteed place in the discussion make it possible for us to begin to understand and shift those barriers. (p. 507)

Edelsky and Harmon (1989) state "It is integral to whole language classrooms that students' questions, perceptions, histories, background knowledge, and preferred ways of making and expressing sense (their primary discourses) are used and respected" (p. 401).

In order for children to learn writing, a sense of ownership must prevail (Calkins, 1986; Goodman, 1986; Graves, 1983; Lamme, 1989; Newman, 1985). Carlin (1986) states that "a writer's intention and emotional involvement with subject matter appear to be prime factors in promoting developed writing performance" (p. 186). Wilkinson, cited in Carlin (1986) states that, "Writing is not just communicative, it is thinking and feeling, and learning to think and feel" (p. 187). In spite of this research, Pinnell's (1975) study of children's language use in primary classrooms showed how infrequently Halliday's personal and heuristic functions of language were encouraged. Children's own knowledge and voices must be validated for reading and writing truly to mean literacy (Harper, 1990).

Shared Writing

In order to develop a voice through writing, children need to develop "a flexible repertoire of strategies for dealing with various aspects of the composing process, as well as for critiquing, revising, and editing their own work" (Weaver, 1991, p. 40). Shared Writing is one of a range of opportunities for writing, the goal of which is to intentionally create a context conducive to children's language learning (McKenzie, 1985). The concept of Shared Writing embodies several of the elements essential to language learning. It contributes to making children's tacit knowledge more conscious as the teacher models the unobservable thinking processes of the writing process. The teacher thinks aloud making writing decisions and techniques explicit for the children. Scaffolding is used while honoring children's own knowledge and intentions (Juliebö, Rauch, & Wolodko, 1989). Oral language interaction and collaboration during composing increases the likelihood that the children will be working in the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher is able to offer suggestions, examples, supportive comments, and praise, to allow the children to work at a more advanced level than they would be able to if working independently.

Shared Writing has its roots in both the Shared Book Experience as described by Holdaway (1979) and the Language Experience Approach (Veatch, Sawicki, Elliott, Flake, & Blakey, 1979), practices widely used in primary classrooms. As with the Shared Book Experience, in Shared Writing the teacher's major role is to model. In the Shared Book Experience the teacher repeatedly models literate behaviour tracking the print on enlarged texts with small groups of children reading along in unison. Masks are often utilized to focus on specific aspects of print (Holdaway, 1979). Combs' (1987) study of this method found that the modeling process was successful in promoting emergent literacy. In both methods the major function of the teacher is that of facilitator and model. The teacher is someone with whom the children can share the pleasure of literacy in a non-competitive and supportive environment.

In the Language Experience Approach the children's own words or oral compositions are written down by the teacher. These are then used as materials for instruction in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Jewell & Zintz, 1986). As with this approach, Shared Writing builds on children's interests and real life experiences. In both, the relationship between spoken and written language is easily discernible and the natural interrelationships of listening, spelling, reading, and writing occur while interacting with the print. However, in Shared Writing the teacher shares in determining the form and content of the writing while consciously modeling the task of the writer. King (1980) states, "When the teacher writes for children, she serves as an interested and encouraging partner, as well as a medium through which the child can see his ideas emerge in visual form." Furthermore, "the teacher as an interested scribe supports the child's efforts, links into his meanings and often helps him find the needed wording" (p. 167).

Shared Writing also incorporates concepts of the Writing Process Approach described by Graves (1983). Children are able to participate in, and observe, writing strategies as they progress from the pre-writing stage through to publication. It is expected that children will notice and benefit from the strategies for which they are developmentally ready (Juliebö, Rauch, & Wolodko, 1989). The Shared Writing method doesn't assume that all children should learn the same things in the same ways at the same time. Emphasis is placed on the communication of content rather than on the mechanics, thereby encouraging risk taking. As with personal writers' conferences in the Writing Process Approach the role of the teacher is to question the writer's intent and interact with the child's ideas. This emphasis on the children's communicative intent is paramount to children's early writing efforts (Clay, 1975). Strickland and Morrow (1989) state that, "Over attention to form can block children from transforming experience and concepts into language" (p. 240). In Shared Writing, children learn to write for numerous real audiences (Gregory & Juliebö, 1990). Improvements in the writing are viewed as a way for students to find ways to share feeling and communicate their voices, not for evaluative and corrective purposes. In this way "ownership" is not taken away from the writers (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983).

Throughout the Shared Writing activity the children remain active, initiating participants, constructing their own meanings. This helps them to maintain their intentions and to gain a sense of ownership (Juliebö, Rauch, & Wolodko, 1989). Cairney & Langbien (1989) state that "...writers who are in control [of their writing] create different texts compared with writers who have had control wrested away from them by their teachers" p. 566). The relationship between the teacher and the children in Shared Writing is somewhat collaborative in nature with the teacher operating in response to the children. Juliebö and Edwards (1989) state, "In Shared Writing the teacher can model approaches to writing and children can bring their own social and cultural backgrounds to learn how to handle written language" (p. 26). Although McKenzie (1985) states that "...the teacher assumes more than an equal role [by taking] on a teaching role in which she enables children to develop and organize ideas" (p. 5), the nature of this role is meant to be more supporting than controlling.

Although Shared Writing theoretically embodies several elements essential to natural language learning, its actual implementation has never been researched in depth. The method is widely employed by teachers, yet there is a noticeable lack of data on the interactional processes and on teacher decision-making and behaviour during Shared Writing.

II. Theoretical Foundation for the Study

Qualitative Research

Research in education has undergone major changes in methodology, purpose, and focus in recent years. In general, there has been a move away from rationalistic (quantitative) inquiry toward naturalistic (qualitative) inquiry. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) explain that qualitative research designs differ from traditional experimental research in three significant areas: the formulation of research problems, the nature of research goals, and the application of research results (p. 33). Naturalistic inquiry is usually rich in description, often with hypotheses and theory developed inductively. However, Pelto and Pelto (1978) state that, "Atheoretical description is not logically possible...all research is structured in theoretical constructs, however implicit and unrecognized by the researcher". Furthermore, "...a random gathering of facts cannot by itself result in an increase of scientific understanding" (p. 15). Bolster (1983) also contends that observers do not approach inquiries in an unbiased way without a frame of reference, therefore, one's methodological and theoretical perspectives should be made clear.

The theoretical systems that provide the frame of reference and basic assumptions from which I will be pursuing my research are Ethnography and Critical Theory. These form the base for the paradigm in which I will be operating. I have chosen to draw upon them for my research because the implicit assumptions they embody are particularly relevant to my study of human action and interaction during Shared Writing. I will not be putting parameters on the methodologies but rather will allow a dialectical relationship to exist between the two. Field studies need to incorporate more than one method in order to gather more than one kind of information (Werner, 1978). A researcher must determine what methods and what kinds of information are relevant to the study of the particular problem or purpose.

Inquiries that demand information involving incidents and histories often utilize participant observation (Ethnography). As well, ethnographic inquiry can be used as a source for generating information about "programs-in-use". In order to understand programs within the context of the school, in-depth descriptions of situations or interactions may be needed (Werner, 1979). Wilcox (1982) states that ethnography is a useful tool "...which allows us to explore in minute and concrete detail the highly complex series of phenomena which operate in and around the classroom" (p. 478). Therefore, ethnography is suited to the study of Shared Writing as a method used in a "whole language" program.

Ethnography

Ethnography is concerned with describing the cultural knowledge people use in their everyday lives in order to make sense of their world and behave in organized ways (Spradley, 1980; Werner, 1979). Culture is made up of the meanings people generate at both the explicit and tacit levels. These meanings are the result of an interpretive process. People generalize and construct their own meanings of a situation in routine taken-for-granted ways and thus derive commonsense assumptions. This construction process is based on two interdependent features--one's personal background or unique biography, and one's everyday social interaction with others. The process is often manifested in intersubjective propositions or shared interpretations, routine patterns, reciprocal activities, rules, etc. Both of the bases for interpretation, personal and social, depend heavily on the context of the situation (Hammersley & Atkinson,1983; Schutz, 1962).

In doing ethnography, a researcher needs to search for, uncover, collect, and describe these interpretations or propositions which participants hold and use. These interpretations include their perceptions, intentions, expectations, and relevances, and can be ascertained by a variety of research techniques including interviews, participant observation, and document study among others (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Spradley, 1980).

In collecting and describing the cultural experiences and meanings of others, the ethnographer, like the participants being studied, also goes through an interpretive process. The process occurs even as behaviours are being observed and recorded, and therefore, determines to a large extent what will be seen and saved in the form of data or field notes (Schutz, 1962). Because of this, the ethnographer can never be totally objective.

Ethnograhers can never eliminate their own biases. They, too, are a part of the social world they study, and thus rely on their own commonsense knowledge. They cannot be free of this aspect of living, known as reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Schutz, 1962). When ethnographers construct categories or focus on particular aspects of a culture, they interpret what is there in light of what is relevant to their purpose or problem. In daily life, it is no different--we only focus on those aspects of our experiences that are relevant to our purposes, and to do otherwise would not only be impossible, but also overwhelming.

However, although ethnographers cannot eliminate these biases, they can explain their point of view. By adopting, if only temporarily, an existing theory, their particular stance is made more clear. By drawing up propositions from the data, they can then determine whether or not they fit the theory. Since the aim is to produce theories that agree with experience, the theory originally selected can be altered, supplemented, or revised as necessary.

The propositions ethnographers come up with are based on the descriptive data they have collected. Thus, the participants' propositions can generate ethnographic propositions (Pelto & Pelto, 1978). These propositions should be able to be substantiated or confirmed through contextualizing them in thick, empirical descriptions, presented in writing. The more the propositions can be grounded in context across varying situations, and the more they can be applied to different times and places, the closer they are to being universals (Spradley, 1980).

Generating empirical propositions is not an activity specific to ethnographic researchers. In everyday life people do this all the time. Because this is so, ethnographers are also able to use subjective knowledge. As participant observers, their own perceptions and feelings are equally valid as a reflection of an ordinary participant's viewpoint. A balance of both subjective and objective interpretations is possible and, indeed, valuable. However, the ethnographer strives to be more conscious of how he/she sets the process in action.

Critical Theory

Critical Theory embodies the idea that our knowledge of reality is limited since all of our thoughts depend on history, culture, and interest (Habermas, 1972). What we observe or sense is not the basis of knowledge since fact and value are always connected (Gibson, 1986). Thought is shaped socially and therefore it is important to look at what is implied in what is actual. Horkheimer, Adorno, & Marcuse all view language as being somewhat limiting when it comes to an individual's ability to criticize, since language about reality is shaped by social bias and since our consciousness is conditioned (Gibson, 1986). Sawada (1989) states, "We create our own reality through the language we use to reflect upon it." Furthermore, as long as we continue to use the same pedagogic language, our ideas won't change (Chamberlin, 1989).

The knowledge generated through Critical Theory, like all knowledge, is concerned with certain interests and values. These include liberation, emancipation, empowerment, and social justice. Other knowledge, especially the knowledge legitimated by schools through the explicit curriculum and the hidden curriculum, is driven by other values that are concerned primarily with reproduction of the dominant ideologies that support the economic system, the state, or the culture (Anyon, 1981; Apple, 1983, 1990; Bernstein, 1974; Giroux, 1983; Giroux, & Penna, 1979; Werner, 1978; Wilcox, 1982).

Critical Theory aims at generating research for education rather that about education (Carson, 1989). Quantitative studies stress a technical interest in facts and generalizations about education, whereas ethnographic studies emphasize interpretive knowing in order to understand the cultural meanings people give to situations. However, the interpretive paradigm, though essential, is " relatively passive because of its interest in the subjective understandings of the participants" (Carson, 1989, p. 14).

Furthermore, Wilcox (1982) states:

> ...the historical origin of ethnography has led ethnographers to focus primarily at the level of face-to-face interaction, and has left them less equipped to investigate or to analytically handle social processes beyond the local level.

> To the extent that life in schools is affected by structures and processes at the level of the large-scale social aggregate, ethnographic analysis may be unacceptably naive and unsophisticated (Erickson, 1979). (p. 478)

Situational, interpretive (ethnographic) perspectives are insufficient because of their limited framework (Carson, 1989; Habermas, 1972; & Werner, 1978). On the other hand, critically active studies are interested in the empowerment and real change that can come from a reflective view of self, and its relations to the wider society and its power structures (Carson, 1989; Habermas, 1972; Giroux, & Penna, 1979; Werner, 1978; & Wilcox, 1982). Critical Theory requires that researchers take into account interrelationships to wider structures and explore "how the nature of the wider society constrains the educational process" (Bolster, 1983; Giroux, & Penna, 1979; Hart, 1990; Werner, 1978; & Wilcox, 1982). Bruner states, "The psychologist or educator who formulates pedagogical theory without regard to the political, economic, and social setting of the educational process courts triviality and merits being ignored in the community and the classroom" (Giroux, & Penna, 1979, p. 29). Bolster (1983) also contends that narrow views of the teaching-learning process generate research that is irrelevant to classroom teachers.

Werner (1978) states:

> Critical examination of programs and classroom activities provides a basis for reorientation and change. Increased awareness may help us liberate ourselves from the perspectives in which we may have become trapped. It is easy to do things without considering alternatives, or without recognizing that there may be other ways of thinking and acting in school situations. As such, critical inquiry and change are inseparable. In the very process of thinking critically the individual is changing his social reality. The taken for granted is transformed by being made explicit. Reflection upon our 'seeing' changes the very seeing itself. Critical sense-making without transformation ends in cynicism. (p. 32)

Hegemony is ingrained in our very being and permeates our lived experience. It is difficult for people to recognize that different ways are possible let alone adopt these new ways. In other words, we don't know what we don't know. Through the process of critical reflection, we are more likely able to break into this realm. Then, of course, once we know something, we can never act again as though we didn't know it.

Critical Action Research and Teacher Change

The literature on teacher change indicates that it is a slow, deep, and complex process that necessitates both the interaction and support of others, as well as time for self-reflection (Fay, 1977; Friere, 1970; Stephens, 1987; Wilcox, 1982). In spite of this, new curricula and methods are often introduced to teachers with the expectation that teacher change and subsequent implementation will be swift and easy (Apple, 1983; & Smyth, 1989). The logic of technical control that drives this type of direction, aimed at teachers, is derived from the "prevailing idea...that theory and knowledge based on empirical research can guide practice and increase the possibility for steadily improving what [teachers do]". However, "the relationship between theory is shown to be more complex and involved than it is ordinarily portrayed in this familiar instrumental and utilitarian view" (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 14-15). In fact, alterations of teachers' beliefs, and the development of understandings of the need for new strategies, which ultimately determine how curricula will be implemented, is difficult and time consuming (Fullan, 1982).

Teachers operate from local tacit theories derived from their knowledge about children and learning (Bolster, 1983; Smith & Shepard, 1988). Their knowledge grows out of personal practical experiences (Bolster, 1983; Clark, 1991; Hart, 1990; Hawthorne, 1986; Smith & Shepard, 1988). The pervasive influence of personal factors was explored by Hawthorne (1986) in her case study of a teacher's curriculum decisions. She found that "personal values and experience [carried] the most weight in selection of content, texts, methods, activities, and evaluation across [the] subjects" (p. 34). Chamberlin (1989) also reported that formal teacher education had little to do with teacher perspectives. Yet, although research has shown the importance of personal practical experience to knowledge "...the academic setting is...generally strongly associated with the impersonal mode of objectively and detachedly addressing issues and has a tendency to invalidate the importance and usefulness of personal experience in the learning process" (Hart, 1990 p. 60). Therefore, any attempts at getting teachers to implement new approaches should be directly tied to their own practical in-class activities (Clark, 1991; Hart, 1990).

Teachers need to gain more personal control over decisions about curriculum content, and how, and at what speed, curriculum will be implemented (Apple, 1983). However, to gain this control, it is necessary that teachers be self-reflective and confront their private actions (Fay, 1977; Gitlin, 1990; & Lather, 1986). Teacher beliefs are revealed in context during practice. By examining their practice they can become explicitly aware of their own embedded interests and beliefs that direct and guide their behaviour (Gibson, 1986). They can try to determine what accounts for their beliefs, thereby being more able to make value judgments of them (Werner, 1978; Willis, 1977). When closely held and previously unquestioned underlying belief systems are confronted in this way, teachers can effect changes as they find them necessary. By uncovering the true interests that direct and guide their behaviour, or revealing what is implied in what is actual, they become empowered and are able to act more autonomously (Gibson, 1986).

Smith (1989) suggests four forms of action that teachers need to pursue in order to become empowered and thus improve their teaching. These include: Describing (What do I do?); Informing (What is the meaning behind my teaching?); Confronting (How did I come to be this way?); and Reconstructing (How might I do things differently?). Carson, (1989) describes critically reflective action in this way:

> The process for critical action research is collaborative and follows a cycle consisting of moments of reflection, planning, acting, observing, reflecting, re-planning etc. which take place in a spiral fashion. These become focused on a project which aims at the transformation of practices, understandings and of the situations where the participants work. The spiral of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting is significant, because it is this which sets critically reflective action research apart from ordinary problem solving, which Carr and Kemmis disdain as an "arrested action research" (p. 185). True critically reflective action research is characterized by a continuing programme of reform. The eventual hoped for result would be a new kind of school and a new society. The main feature of this new rational society is the "organization of enlightenment. (p. 15)

Teaching is not a value-free, neutral or apolitical activity (Apple, 1990; Bruner, cited in Giroux, & Penna, 1979; Friere, 1970; Giroux, & Penna, 1979; & Wilcox, 1982). The day-to-day practices and regularities of classroom life, the knowledge that is given priority through the curriculum, and the teacher's own fundamental perspectives, are all interconnected to the dominant ideologies of our culture (Apple, 1990; Bolster, 1983; & Giroux, & Penna, 1979). Commonsense interpretations, shared conventions, and assumptions, are derived largely from the institutionalized schooling process (Bolster, 1983; & Hart, 1990). Bolster (1983) states, "Schooling is one of the universal experiences in our society, and it engenders a set of widely held expectations that broadly define appropriate teacher behaviour". Furthermore, "teachers, having to practice their craft in a hierarchically structured organization alongside their professional peers, will tend to adhere to superordinate standards of belief with which all acceptable professionals must agree" (p. 300). In this way, the nature of the teaching role itself is a stabilizing factor on beliefs (Bolster, 1983). Bolster (1983) also states that "Under such circumstances, knowledge tends to become objectified, that is, beliefs, norms, and values will typically be perceived as inherent in the particular work situation and consequently not easily subject to change" (p. 100). Because the knowledge is objectified in this way, it is perceived as being "reality" and therefore, it is difficult to effect change. This pervasive consciousness of society, secured by internalized norms, acts as an indirect mechanism of repression, inconspicuously silencing certain interests (Apple, 1990; Hart, 1990; McLaren, 1989). Apple (1990) refers to these modes of incorporation, known as hegemony, and states that the main agencies of hegemony are the schools (other agencies include media, family, literature, business, economic systems, etc.).

It is necessary to uncover the dominant ideology embodied in the teacher's curricular decisions, actions, and reactions to students (Apple, 1990; & Bolster, 1983). The meanings and practices emphasized by the school, via the teachers, need to be examined to determine the true interests embodied within them, in order to question them (Apple, 1990). Cherryholmes (1988) also advocates "critical pragmatism" (p. 14) since it considers the underlying systems that structure behavioural choices made during interactions. By uncovering the nature of the forces that constrain them, teachers can start to work at changing those conditions. Hart (1990) refers to the process as "liberation through consciousness raising", comparing it to the women's movement (p. 47). If teachers can uncover the underlying interests, they cease acting on tacit assumptions, which limit their actions, and thereby can create new forms of action. Therefore, from critical analyses can come counter-hegemonies.

Teacher empowerment can only result from a mutual sharing of ideas, observations, and questions, rather than from a one way flow of prescriptions or suggestions. In discovering and analyzing the particular institutional and cultural arrangements that control teachers decisions and actions, it is possible to effect change to rebuild those arrangements (Apple, 1990).

III. Methodology and Design of the Study

Guiding Questions

The following questions guided the inquiry at the outset:

1. Do interactions between a teacher and students during Shared Writing change over time? If so, in what ways?

2. Are any interactions related to the process of critical reflection by the teacher? How does critical reflection by the teacher seem to affect subsequent interactions?

3. What meanings and beliefs underlie the teacher's interactions during Shared Writing?

4. Are there any shifts or changes in teacher beliefs following critical self-reflection? If so, how are these manifested in interactions during Shared Writing episodes, discussions with the researcher, and in journal entries?

Participants

Selection of Research Site

The study took place in an elementary grade one/two classroom, in a suburban school that services a middle-class neighborhood.

To obtain access to the research site, I contacted the Research and Evaluation Department of the school district involved. I was required to submit an application for permission to conduct research in schools. I also submitted a statement, outlining the significance of the study, the research methodology, and the nature of the research report at the conclusion of the study. (Appendix F).

The school was chosen for a number of practical reasons, as well as for the methodological reasons outlined earlier. Practical reasons included the fact that I was able to get to the school easily on a regular basis, an important consideration in terms of time and money. I could change observation points within the room if needed. As well, the school owned a video recorder and tripod, a tape recorder, and a television monitor with a VCR machine, which I was able to borrow. As well, the administrator was supportive during the entire research project.

Selection and Orientation of the Teacher

The teacher in this study was selected according to the following criteria:

1. The teacher agreed to be involved actively in the research process. She agreed to work collaboratively with me through the data collection phase of the research project.

2. The teacher agreed to keep a journal.

3. The teacher was open to learn and change and be interested in professional development.

The Research and Evaluation Department of the school district suggested teachers who they thought may be interested in working with me. I met with a number of teachers to ascertain their suitability for the research. Following the interviewing of these teachers, I selected one teacher, Mrs. Carter, who taught a split grade one/grade two class. She seemed to fulfill the participant requirements I had outlined. Mrs. Carter had a long, distinguished teaching career and she was engaged in graduate studies.

I understood that it would be important for the teacher and me to establish a positive professional relationship prior to the actual commencement of data collection (Perrin, Rogers & Waller, 1987; Stephens, 1987). In order to assess the teacher's expectations, and our ability to work together on the study, I met with her on two occasions prior to the study.

Perrin, Rogers, and Waller, (1987) state that, "...clear articulation of project goals, understanding of each...member's roles and responsibilities, and agreement concerning how results of [the] study will be disseminated can reduce [the] threat of conflict" (p. 39). Kennedy, cited in Kyle and McCutcheon (1984), identified four basic types of teachers' roles in collaborative research and, therefore, discussion concerning our role definitions was crucial (Kyle & McCutcheon, 1984). As well, it was important for me to ascertain other crucial factors, such as limits on the teacher's time and energy. These limits had an effect on the time frame of the data collection period. Therefore, during the initial entry phase, the teacher and I explored and discussed various aspects of the study, including roles, responsibilities, expectations, time for dialogue, and I shared my purpose for doing the study, including the possibility of the venture leading to professional and personal growth for both of us. Bolster (1983) reported that teachers are "willing to invest many hours discussing observational data with researchers and have retrospectively reported that the experience was both professionally productive and intellectually stimulating" (p. 306). I elicited the teacher's needs, purposes, and expectations for participating in the study. As well, I indicated my intention to share the results of the study, in abbreviated form, with Mrs. Carter.

Following the first meeting I provided Mrs. Carter with two articles, (McKenzie, 1985; Juliebö, Rauch, & Wolodko, 1989) on the topic of Shared Writing. Since she had never heard of, or undertaken, Shared Writing, I felt it would be of benefit for her to read some written material related to the subject. I also explained the concept of Shared Writing, and my requirements for the research.

During the second meeting, Mrs. Carter agreed to become a participant. She signed an agreement, which was drafted in order to protect both parties. (Appendix E). As well, at that time, I collected the permission forms that had been completed by the parents of the children selected to participate in the study. (Appendix C).

Anonymity was assured. The use of fictitious names and locations as a safeguard to protect the participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality has been undertaken. The teacher's journal and any copies I have made will be kept confidential, although the content of the journal will be reported through the study.

By being directly involved throughout the study it was expected that the teacher would gain a sense of ownership. It was hoped that, because of this ownership, the teacher would be more likely to utilize the findings of the study in future teaching practice. Bolster (1983) found that teachers who participate actively, "tend to develop more differentiated and reflective views of their teaching" (p. 306). In this way, research and theory may inform practice.

Selection of the Students

The students in this study were selected according to the following criteria:

1. The students observed were in a grade one classroom.

2. The students' parents gave clearance for video and audio recording prior to the study.

Since I did not know the students in the class, I asked the teacher to select the students. I requested she choose four or five students who were at the emergent stage of writing. Originally, the teacher had two grade one and two grade 2 students in mind. However, after having read the articles I provided to her, she decided that all grade one students would be a more appropriate choice. The girls were Alecia, who had learned English as a second language, and Heidi, who was experiencing difficulties learning to read. The boys were Darren, who the teacher described as “bright”, and Ivan, described as “a reluctant risk-taker”. I observed these four students for part of a day prior to the Shared Writing sessions, in order to get to know them a bit better, and to allow them to feel comfortable having me and the equipment around.

The teacher rearranged her classroom, to place the children together in one group of desks, making the observation task easier for me. It also gave the group some time to get to know one another better, before having to collaborate on writing.

Methods of Primary Data Collection

It is essential that qualitative research embody a plan for careful, systematic observation of events. The following methods of data collection, utilized throughout this study are consistent with the theoretical foundation established earlier.

Internal Validity

The internal validity of the study was supported through prolonged engagement as well as through a triangulation of data acquisition. Stake (1988) describes triangulation as "...trying to arrive at the same meaning by at least three independent approaches" and he further states that "naturally a finding that has been triangulated by several independent data-holdings is usually more credible than one that has not" (p. 263). Data triangulation is critical if the information supplied is going to be deemed trustworthy (Lather, 1986; Pelto & Pelto, 1978).

In analysis, it was expected that the data would converge rather than be inconsistent or contradictory, by utilizing the following data triangulation.

1. Written concrete descriptive records (field notes) were collected during observation of teacher-student interactions during the Shared Writing activities, and during interviews or discussions with the teacher. These included non-verbal communication as well as language. Verbatim comments were recorded wherever possible.

2. Audiotape recordings of the interactions were made. Pertinent selections of these recordings were transcribed for analysis.

3. Videotape recordings of the interactions were made. Spindler and Spindler (1982) state, "Securing as complete an audiovisual record as possible is important, because this record can be analyzed and interpreted in different ways again and again" (p. 43). Bolster (1983) also finds videotaping useful as a check on live observations. He states "when played back to a teacher it can also be an effective stimulus to the recall of forgotten perceptions of classroom events" (p. 308).

4. Audiotape recordings of the planned interviews or discussions with the teacher were made. Pertinent sections of these recordings were transcribed.

5. An ongoing, introspective personal journal was kept. I expressed my hunches, intuitions, apprehensions, impressions and reactions following the Shared Writing activities, interviews, discussions, and reviewing of tapes. LeCompte & Goetz (1982); Peshkin (1988); and Spradley (1980) recommend that ethnographers monitor themselves within the setting, and study their influence on it, as well as study the setting itself. Peshkin (1988) refers to this process as "taming subjectivity" and contends that it will result in "enhanced awareness" (p. 20).

6. The teacher kept an interactive, reflective journal of thoughts, questions and understandings. Kyle and McCutcheon (1984) contend that the insider's view "...permits researchers to eavesdrop on many aspects of teaching inaccessible without a teachers involvement--the teacher's philosophy, thought processes, attitudes, emotional responses to events, and so forth" (p. 174). Journals are an effective way of providing this insider view (Kyle & McCutcheon, 1984). The teacher's journal served as a member check and was a way of verifying if my propositions were correct. I responded with ideas and questions as stimuli for the teacher's reflection. My comments were not intended to be evaluative but were aimed at leading the teacher to think more deeply or clearly in order to carry on a personal exploration.

7. Audiotape recordings of the teacher and my responses or comments made during the viewing of videotaped sessions were made.

External Validity (Generalizability)

The term generalizability usually refers to whether the findings of a particular piece of research would be similar in another setting with different subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Because this study was a case study of only one teacher, in one classroom, it was not possible to generalize in this conventional way. However, although it may or may not be representative of other cases, it is not necessary to dismiss all findings as invalid because it lacks demonstrable representativeness (Bolster, 1983; & Stake, 1988). It may be possible to transfer many of the generated statements to other settings and subjects and to compare the results to other case studies (Bolster, 1983). LeCompte and Goetz (1982) state that ethnographers "...aim in application for comparability and translatability of findings rather than for outright transference to groups not investigated" (p. 34).

Stake (1988) describes the concept of arriving at general understandings of things through the experience of individual events as "naturalistic generalization" and insists that this method of acquiring understanding or way of knowing is useful and needed, as well as understandings derived through experimentation and induction.

In order to allow the reader to be able to compare and determine the degree of fit between this context and other like and unlike groups I have delineated clearly the characteristics of the setting and subjects. As well, the research methods, written descriptions, and analysis of data are presented precisely, explicitly, and in detail, often supported by quotes. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) state that, "Assuring comparability and translatability provides the foundation upon which comparisons are made" (p. 34).

Stake (1988) insists that generalizations will be made by readers of the study if they recognize similarities to other cases of interest to them. In other words, "Validity depends on the validity of purpose and points of view of the reader. The reader carries some of the responsibility for interpretation " (p. 261).

External Reliability (replicability)

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) state that, "External reliability addresses the issue of whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomena or generate the same constructs in the same or similar settings" (p. 32). Peshkin (1988) suggests that interpretations be made by more than one person in order for the researcher to test or compare his/her interpretations against others'.

In qualitative research the inquirer is the instrument for data collection. In some research approaches it is important for the instrument to be consistent in what andhow it records data over time. However, it is quite possible that my view of the processes may change over time as my own knowledge grows and changes. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) point out how personalistic the ethnographic process is. For this reason I have stated precisely what I have done. It is hoped that any variance in my point of view will become readily apparent through my data analyses and that it will be possible to detect where these changes evolved from through an examination of the data collected.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) state, "Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations" (p. 44).

In order to verify or confirm that the field notes collected fit with what actually occurred, the videotapes and audiotapes were reviewed and the notes and interpretations checked by a person external to the study.

Internal Reliability

Internal reliability refers to the question of whether, within a single study, multiple observers will agree on the description or composition of events. Using mechanical devices (audio and video equipment) to record and preserve data is one way of insuring that any conclusions drawn can be confirmed by an examination of the raw data by other researchers (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Further, describing a sufficient amount of behaviours and activities in concrete, precise terms, using as few inferences as possible, as well as verbatim comments of spoken language, assures accuracy of raw data (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Pelto & Pelto 1978). Following the analysis of the primary data, excerpts of the descriptions were presented to substantiate any interpretations, conclusions, or analytic categories.

Reactivity (observer effect)

The presence of the researcher can change the behaviours of the subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Perrin, Rogers & Waller, 1987). In this study I attempted to minimize this effect by being as unobtrusive as possible during the Shared Writing episodes. I was a passive observer, while the sessions were occurring. However, I necessarily had an effect on the teacher's decisions, through the joint discussions following each Shared Writing episode, and through the interactive journals. It is important to note that this effect was intentional, being the result of my role as an educative researcher.

To minimize the effect of the video and audio recorders, they were set up a few days in advance so that the children and teacher had a chance to become accustomed to their presence.

I deliberately worked against treating the teacher as a subject and worked toward safeguarding interests and sensitivities by establishing a rapport and by acting in a non-threatening manner. Interviews were unstructured and relatively open-ended, resembling natural conversations more than question and answer sessions. Through dialogue, in person, and in the interactive journal, I clearly made my interests known, communicated my research objectives, and sought cooperation, emphasizing the why's rather than how to's . Hopefully this dispelled any notion of my being an "expert" with an inclination to evaluate. I tried to keep in mind Werner's (1979) statement:

> Fitting into the time of other people, and being dependent upon good relations with them for entry and acceptance require patience on the part of the researcher. Willingness to listen, openness to frequent change, ability to try various methodological avenues, and interpersonal skills are a part of the ethnographer's toolbox as they are for any researcher in the social sciences. (p. 8)

Subjectivity

As with all qualitative studies, the question of subjectivity in data gathering and interpretation arose (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Schutz, 1962). Varying perspectives affect how we see each other (Schutz, 1962). Stake (1988) states "...different researchers have different conceptualizations of the problem and set different boundaries for the case" (p. 256). One must establish the degree to which findings are the result of subjects and not of biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher. Peshkin (1988) contends that researchers need to "...avoid the trap of perceiving just that which [their] own untamed sentiments have sought out and served up as data", and that "...if trapped [they] run the risk of presenting a study that has become blatantly autobiographical" (p. 20).

Several ethnomethodologists consider it essential for investigators of social phenomena to search honestly for, illuminate, and record, their own personal predispositions and commonsense understandings prior to, and during, the enquiry (Apple, 1990; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Peshkin, 1988). Peshkin (1988) states "...researchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity, not retrospectively when the data have been collected and the analysis is complete, but while their research is actively in progress" (p. 17). Peshkin (1988) refers to this as "situational subjectivity" (p. 18). In this way, their own tacit commonsense assumptions and biases can be bracketed or suspended more easily and researchers can become "...aware of how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17).

Furthermore, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) state, "What observers see and report is a function of the position they occupy within participant groups, the status accorded them, and the role behaviour expected of them" (p. 46). Peshkin (1988) also contends that the "...circumstances of one's class, [and] statuses" (p. 17) interact with the particulars of a study. Therefore, research reports should "...clearly identify the researchers role and status within the group investigated" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 38).

In order to acknowledge and take into account my effect on the data, I have included a brief statement of my perspectives and beliefs about teaching. This, together with the personal journal kept during the study, helped me to be more aware of how my own biases and interests shaped, filtered, blocked, or transformed the collection, organization, and interpretation of data. It will also aid the reader in making similar judgments.

Methods of Data Analysis

In this study parts of the data collection phase and the data analysis phase were concurrent. However, additional, more formal analysis was undertaken following exit from the field. Analyses conducted throughout the period of observation facilitated the emergent direction and design of later collection phases. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggest that observation sessions be planned to build on previous ones.

Shortly after entering the field I assessed the general questions brought to the study for relevancy and made decisions regarding the need for reformulation or abandonment. Other questions, as well as some possible themes, emerged in the process of collecting the data (Spradley, 1980).

Suggestions from Spradley (1980), and LeCompte and Goetz (1981) were consulted in order to reduce and classify the primary data, for interpretation and presentation. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) were also consulted as they provided a valuable guide for developing coding categories and for the mechanical handling and sorting of data. The choice of analytic strategies were determined largely by the purpose of the study, the nature of the problem, and the theoretical perspectives that informed the problem (LeCompte & Goetz, 1981).

Role of the Researcher

Intentions of the Researcher

It was my intention to implement an alternative approach to teacher in-service education. My objective was to fully describe and document systematically the social interactions between the teacher and the children, in order that the teacher and I could evaluate these interactions jointly. I described the nature of the curricular decisions of the teacher, and their genesis, as far as possible. This was done in order that I could facilitate reflective practice on the part of the teacher. It was my intention to dialogue with the teacher in order to confront and solve problems that we both saw arising from a critique of the observed interactions.

Researcher's Beliefs about Teaching

I believe that, in teaching, it is important to consider the whole child, focusing on intellectual, emotional, social, creative, and physical development. In order to do this, I utilize observation techniques to become aware of the children's backgrounds, strengths, and needs. I feel it is important to determine what interests children and attempt to provide experiences that capitalize on and expand these interests.

It is important to use a variety of teaching strategies, learning resources, and activities in order to provide for a range of learning styles. I believe that learning can occur when children are allowed to interact with one another and with adults. It is important to create a community of learners by encouraging children to support one another. Outside human resources, such as volunteers and older students, are a good way to build in more social interaction.

I feel it is essential to provide a safe and secure environment for children and work toward developing positive self-concepts. Children need to feel comfortable to take risks and solve problems, and often require time and space to discover connections on their own. They need to be able to progress at a pace that is right for them individually.

I feel it is important to be sensitive to individual needs and avoid over-directing, while maintaining a well-disciplined atmosphere. I believe that a teacher can facilitate learning by supporting children when necessary, through thoughtful intervention and questioning at opportune moments.

I am convinced that a holistic approach to language learning and development is beneficial, but that direct teaching continues to be a necessary part of today's classroom.

I am aware that as a teacher I have to work within my own limitations, and constraints, and that these may hinder me in my ability to reach all of my goals. However, I see myself as a learner as much as a teacher. I seek to learn from my colleagues, current research, and my own practical experiences. I feel that I continue to learn with and from the children I teach every day. I feel that it is okay to admit failures and shortcomings in order to change myself.

I believe that it is important for me to reflect on my own ideas, habits, attitudes, and actions. I am also aware that my personal biases and assumptions affect what I see.

I believe in the importance of a supportive community in my life. Without support from other people I cannot take the risks that are necessary.

IV. Reports and Interpretations of the Data

The following reports describe and interpret the observations I made during the Shared Writing sessions, the comments made by Mrs. Carter during the viewing of the videotapes, and comments contained in her journal. By compiling the various pieces of collected data in this way, it is expected that the reader will understand the connections between them. (A more concise outline of the data collection phase of the study can be found in Appendix A).

It is important to note that although I have recorded the actions, and comments as they actually occurred, these reports are not strictly observational. I have included researcher interpretation throughout the reports and have expanded on these interpretations in the following chapter.

Session One, May 4,1992

On the first day that Mrs. Carter met with the focus children for the purpose of Shared Writing, the small group sat at one side of the room, around a rectangular table, near a chalkboard. The remainder of the class was engaged in "writer's workshop", a time set aside for individual writing.

Mrs. Carter came to the initial session with a distinct idea of what they could write about. She planned to have the children write a patterned song based on an already familiar song, "I Bought Me a Cat". She brought a copy of that song to the table and read it with the children. Following this shared activity, Mrs. Carter invited the children to make up a song about another animal (not a farm animal). In order to initiate this she asked, "What are some possible ways we could change this?" She had already written on the board "I bought me a Hippo", and had indicated later in her journal that she "had thought we would do a jungle animals patterned song".

Mrs. Carter listed a number of ideas, including toys, on the board, as they were suggested by the students. She then began to create a web on the board with Toys as the central idea. Children were invited to come up to the board and write their ideas. As they did so, Mrs. Carter helped them in their encoding. For example, when Heidi wrote goD for dog, she pointed out the reversal error, and when she wrote rf , she substituted arf arf. Similiarly, when Darren wrote waw wa for Pow Pow, the sound of a gun, Mrs. Carter said, "Isn't this a P?" Interestingly, later in the lesson, Darren made the comment "These sounds are hard to spell." However, this comment was remembered later by Mrs. Carter in her journal as being, "These words are hard. It's good we don't have to spell them."

In her journal, Mrs. Carter also noted that she saw "children enjoying being a member of such a small group. Alecia really tuned in. She sometimes does not." She made some brief plans, stating that next time they would " work orally at first and just kick around words and sentences" and for the future, "work with webs. Collectively, then individually." She also felt she needed to deal more effectively with the remainder of the class, and stated "work on independence. The group should be able to work without me for 20 minutes!"

The lesson, due to a technical problem, was recorded without any sound. Therefore, we did not discuss the lesson in detail together. However, in my own personal journal I had noted that Mrs. Carter did comment that she felt the session went well. She commented to me that her oldest child used to complain that she was too inflexible, going on to say that indeed she does "like to have things down pat" and felt that "comes from being a teacher". This statement was a telling one, since she obviously felt the need to have a model in order to get the children started on their writing. Of course, in one of the articles I had given her to read, a pattern was used with the children, so perhaps she felt comfortable using an idea tried previously, being unfamiliar with Shared Writing as a teaching strategy, prior to this.

I noticed that she demonstrated flexibility when she deviated from her initial idea of jungle animals, and picked up on the childrens' idea of toys, which they were obviously interested in. By using a pattern she was also able to provide the children with some built-in structure, which may have made the composing process easier for them.

It was obvious that the children were excited to be part of the special group. Mrs. Carter also demonstrated throughout the lesson a high level of motivation by her tone of voice and her body language. There was inflection and excitement in her voice. She sat upright and alert and was attentive to most of the children's comments, moving her eyes around them, smiling and nodding.

At the conclusion of this session, the written product was incomplete. Mrs. Carter opted to complete it with the children the next day, when I would not be present (figure 1). They could start with a fresh new idea for the next observation period. Mrs. Carter and I agreed on this arrangement.

Session Two, May 6, 1992

Mrs. Carter had been thinking about the Shared Writing activity and proceeded to make some changes as a result of her thoughts. As the next day's session began I noticed that she had decided to omit the use of the chalkboard and instead used paper on the table that they were all seated at. I wondered what effect, if any, the change in format would have on the children. Indeed, Darren, part way through the lesson, inquired, "Why are you writing this on paper instead of the chalkboard?". When Mrs. Carter asked him if he wanted her to do it on the chalkboard, he answered, "No, it's better on paper." Later, during our reviewing of the videotape and discussion, Mrs. Carter explained why she chose to make this change. She explained, "It's different. Like with the board you need it for the big group. The end people have a different perspective though. They see the hand...they see everything, For a six-year old they are not able to do as much transformation as easily as we can." She reflected on her personal experience as a child, being unable to copy from the board easily, in spite of being often required to do so.

Mrs. Carter chose to use a patterned book, The Amazing Popple Seed by Joy Cowley, to set the scene for the lesson. She explained to the children that today they would be doing a new story or song, and suggested using the little book, "to help us, to use as a pattern". As she began to read aloud to the children, Darren interjected, saying, "You can change the things after it", referring to the ending part of each patterned sentence. Darren obviously felt free to initiate an interaction, by making a suggestion for their writing.

The end of the book read, "The hen gave me an amazing popple seed. And I started all over again." Mrs. Carter suggested, "So that's what we could do. We could start all over again. We could write "The Amazing Popple Seed number two." The school secretary appeared at the door with a message, and as Mrs. Carter went to answer the door, she left the group with the instruction to, "think about that for a minute and think about what kinds of things you'd like to have growing on the tree. Do you want a category or do you want things that are all similar like toys, or what? Can you talk about that?" While the teacher was away from the table, Darren suggested, "How about we do birds?" and then Alecia, giggling, suggested "this one's a funny one... Barbie", said in a whisper.

Both of the suggestions were noted by the teacher when she returned to the table. Although Ivan raised his hand to make another suggestion, it was unacknowledged. Mrs. Carter wrote, 'Barby' [sic] on the paper (figure 2), then Heidi suggested, "No, okay...um, the amazing cat...on day number one it grew a nose." Mrs. Carter was obviously amused by this idea, and agreed with Heidi, when she said, "That would be neat". Darren also agreed, saying "I think the amazing cat would be good". Subsequently, Mrs. Carter also wrote 'The Amazing Cat' on the same paper. At this point she asked Alecia if she liked the idea. Even though Alecia nodded yes, the teacher went on to say, "It could be a Barbie tree. We could grow a Barbie and Ken. It could grow all different kinds of Barbies. How many different kinds of Barbies are there?" As a result of this question., a number of different Barbies were suggested, and written on a piece of scratch paper, which she later explained to the children was "just for rough work...so I have lots of rough paper around" (figure 3).

As well, Mrs. Carter used other sheets of paper to list ideas for other stories, and to list all of the things the cat seed had to grow (figure 4). She pointed these out to the group of children, explaining, "This is our idea for another story and this is our scratch pad. Later she explained during our discussion, "It occurred to me while the lesson was happening that it would be good if kids, for them to see the teacher use scratch paper". This showed how Mrs. Carter was thinking about the process even as she was in the midst of teaching it. In her journal Mrs. Carter also referred to this way of recording thoughts during the writing: "I think it might be helpful to the children to see an adult writer making rough notes, and referring to them in her writing."

In discussion Mrs. Carter said that she wanted to pick up on the Barbie theme because, "Alecia doesn't share many ideas with me in class". However, although

Mrs. Carter spent considerable time brainstorming for some ideas on the topic of Barbies, she later steered them deliberately back to Heidi's original idea, saying "Okay, well let's go back to this cat ...the amazing seed idea", and asked, "Is that the one...is that...do we all like that idea?" All agreed, however Mrs. Carter inquired, "Do we want to do something with Barbie later?" Again, the group response was, "Yeah". Wondering why she had done this, I questioned Mrs. Carter about it later, during the reflection time. She explained herself, saying "A lot of little girls are into Barbie, so why not capitalize on it. So, maybe, we'll do something about Barbie later." It appeared that Mrs. Carter wanted to accept Alecia's idea, yet was somehow too uncomfortable with it to use it in the writing. As well, Darren had commented, "The cat one I think is the best", while the group was coming up with a list of Barbies. Although Mrs. Carter did not acknowledge this statement at the time, she did so by her actions later on.

In spite of a recognition of the importance of scratch paper in the writing process, Mrs. Carter did not incorporate the idea of rough drafts. Following Darren's comment about using paper rather then chalkboard, she stated that it would be a book. As a result, she found herself requiring the children to come up with words she felt would be suitable, or exact words to fit what she had recorded. The following example demonstrated this: She had already written "she grew a" and, therefore, would not accept any plural nouns from the children. Later she explained, "I wanted to push them to see if they could come up with something that would be appropriate, that would be an a", but later she went on to reflect, "I don't think that was a very good idea and I think I'll deviate from that and then we'll see how it goes. It is sort of hampering things...it's hampering the kids' input. I thought originally, it isn't as simple as I thought it would be, but I thought that this activity was so simple that if we stuck to the original...but it's not simple. Maybe that will be our draft, if we have to do a bunch of editing, if it turns out as we go along. I thought it would come quite quickly and easily."

Mrs. Carter's willingness to try something a different way was evident from her statement, "I never think it was the best way to go. I always think there could have been a better way."

Near the end of this session when the authors' names were being recorded, Alecia commented, "It should be by Mrs. Carter", rather than by the children's names that

Mrs. Carter was beginning to write on the paper. Mrs. Carter's response to this comment was that she was just doing the writing and that she was just the recorder. In fact, she was far more than "just a recorder", since she had the ultimate control over what would be included and what would be omitted. She not only exerted control over the process, but over the content, and the actual creativity of the children.

Mrs. Carter's control over the nature of the whole story became evident when Heidi suggested, "The amazing cat. On day number one it grew a nose," and Mrs. Carter responded with enthusiasm saying, "Oh! You want to change it to an amazing cat! Oh! The amazing cat instead of the amazing seed. Okay." Heidi then inquired, "What are we having it do, the amazing cat?" To this Mrs. Carter responded, "I don't know. We don't have to decide that." Here, she made a decision not to allow Heidi to create ideas for what the cat could do in the story. To do so would have changed the whole nature of the story, making it a narrative rather than a patterned story, like the model she had chosen. In fact, the idea to have the cat grow body parts was completely hers, and when this idea was first presented, Heidi agreed, but with a laugh. Later in the journal, Mrs. Carter recalled the episode quite differently than the way it actually happened, recording that "someone suggested that a cat could grow, that it could be a cat seed." The idea of a cat seed was recalled as being Darren's idea, during Mrs. Carter's reflection following this session, however in actual fact the amazing cat was Heidi's idea and the cat seed was Mrs. Carter's.

By using the patterned story idea, the teacher limited the possibilities. She was aware of the hampered input herself, but attributed it to the lack of a draft rather than to her choice of this model. Other instances of her placing parameters on the children's thinking occurred during this session. For example, she explained her creation of a list of things for the cat seed to grow by saying, "There was only going to be a limited number of pages in the book and so we had to have some limits as to what the cat was going to grow. It couldn't grow an ear and then the other ear, and then an eye and then another eye. We had to have some limits."
Mrs. Carter stuck closely to her own idea of what the book should be: It would have a limited number of pages, it would be all rhyming, or not rhyming at all, and it would not be too nonsensical.

At other times, Mrs. Carter would provide a sentence or idea and then seek consent by the children. For example when going from the topic of Barbies to the cat seed idea she said, "Let's go back to the cat seed idea (physically putting the Barbie sheet of paper aside) then asking, "Do we all like that one. Is that the one you want to use?" Of course the response was, "Yeah". When she started the story by saying, "On day number one..." she continued on to ask, "Is that what you want to say", and later asked, "Is it going to be planted in the ground?"

Mrs. Carter limited the amount of silly ideas elicited by the children, although she herself had suggested the notion of a tree growing Barbies during a previous session. When Darren made the suggestion of planting the seed, "in a dish of cat food on the floor", she responded by saying "Well, this is already a silly or unusual idea, so maybe we should keep the rest of it sort of believable." Then, taking her decision to Alecia (who had suggested planting it "in a garden" asked, "What do you think?" When the group finally took a vote and decided on the garden, she gave Alecia credit for the group having arrived at consensus. "Way to Go Alecia! You got consensus." In fact, Mrs. Carter had manufactured the consent, so as to have it go her own way!

It was very apparent that the children liked the idea of using rhyming words in the story. Darren was the first to suggest, "On day number one it grew a thumb". Ivan showed his support for this by exclaiming, "It rhymes!", and Heidi showed her agreement and approval with a, "Yeah". However, Mrs. Carter chose to ignore the suggestion altogether. Later, Darren also suggested a plum or a tongue for day number one. Tongue was added to the written list. As well, for day number two, Darren suggested, "She was brand new", Heidi suggested, "She grew and grew", and for day number three, Darren suggested, "She grew a knee". Then, when it became apparent that rhyming would be difficult for the other numbers, Mrs. Carter stated, "I don't know if we're going to be able to come up with rhymes. So we won't rhyme, unless we can all of a sudden think of some." In her journal she commented, "We checked to see if there were parts that would rhyme with the number words, one, two, three so that we could make a rhyming book. There were not, so we went ahead without rhyme." During discussion, she mentioned, "I also thought at that point that maybe we could make it rhyme, like on day number one it grew a thumb. It was abandoned." Interestingly, during the session, the children kept coming back to rhyming, such as when Darren suggested, "she grew a shoe", and Heidi suggested "she was two" for day number two. It did not appear to occur to Mrs. Carter that perhaps some of the days could have rhyming words, while others did not.

Rather than pick up on many of the children's spontaneous and creative ideas, Mrs. Carter chose to 'fish' for the word she wanted in the story. She did this by repeatedly asking, "What would be the thing that she'd need the most?" The first answer to this was tongue, to which she replied, "Would that be the most important thing that a cat needs to stay alive?" Then, trying to provide the correct answer, suggestions of a brain, a nose, and a heart were given. Although these were added to the list of suggestions, Alecia's "sensible" suggestion of body was finally selected for use in the story. When brain was suggested by Ivan (who didn't make many comments as it was) Mrs. Carter said,"If she grew a head could we presume it had a brain in it?" Darren then expanded the sentence to be, "It grew a head and it had a brain in it", but this was rejected by Mrs. Carter, with her saying, "We will know that". So when, Darren suggested heart, Heidi added, " She's already got it in her body", demonstrating just how much influence the teacher had.

Later, during discussion of the videotape, Mrs. Carter became aware of what she had done and commented, "I was fishing for that. I needed that. Me, the teacher, needed that cat to have a body." Later, in a journal entry, she stated that the purpose of fishing was, "to catch something!" , and stated emphatically that, "I am the recorder, but also a participant".

At other times, student input was not accepted at all. When Alecia offered the idea of sharp teeth, Mrs. Carter wrote sharp in small letters beside the word teeth. However, when Alecia went on to suggest happy face, she omitted writing it down, stating, "We've got face". She later commented on this during our discussion, explaining, "I guess what I had in my mind was these are just more scientific or just getting down the names of body parts". Her inability to relinquish her control over the writing hampered the chance for the children to develop their own skills of using descriptive language in their writing. In reflection, Mrs. Carter felt that this was not the best decision on her part. "I did the little asterisk and put sharp teeth and I could have put a little asterisk and put happy face. And she probably thought she gave sharp teeth and that was accepted so now she'll give another adjective and then the stupid teacher doesn't take it."

At times Mrs. Carter used her language to control the amount of silliness the children were exhibiting. At one point when Darren suggested that the cat may need a tongue the most (in answer to Mrs. Carter's direct question) she admonished him with, "Let's get serious". Her rising frustration of not being able to elicit from them the word she was searching for was evident here, although she may have been attempting to bring the child back on task or control behaviour. In her journal Mrs. Carter made the comment that the children, "...got a bit silly today. Alecia was playing with her 3-d picture. For the most part they were with it, however." In a later entry, she also reflected on these things, mentioning that she thought silliness "happened because the children felt freer in the small group". A few entries later, in coming back to the topic of silliness, she expressed, "Silliness often has value - Dennis Lee and Ogden Nash certainly think so. It helps to loosen people up, and enjoy being together. It can facilitate the learning of limits as it can become too frivlolous sometimes if it just goes on, forever, as it were - or for a whole day (or week or month)."

Mrs. Carter thought the children needed "time to tune in to it", referring to the Shared Writing process. Because of this, "they didn't say too much about the writing". "This is the 2nd time they had done this acitivity - it's new, and they need time to figure out what is possible." In some respects, however, Mrs. Carter limited these very possibilities for the children. When Heidi suggested the word hair, Mrs. Carter questioned, "Fur or hair?", and Heidi responded with the corrected "Fur". Fur was added to the list. Eyeballs were omitted, with the comment, "We've got eyes". Lips were suggested by Darren. After a brief discussion on whether or not cats have lips, they were omitted from the list, even though Heidi felt they did. Also, Heidi suggested arms, and a discussion as to whether cats have arms ensued. The group agreed that they did, but Mrs. Carter chose to omit this from the list as well.

Mrs. Carter later recalled the group discussion over whether cats have arms or not. As she reflected on the episode, she stated that had she overridden the children, by emphatically stating that they do not have arms but four legs, "the children would have accepted it, but they would have gone away sure that the cat had arms and that the teacher was mean". She commented with a laugh, "Might as well come out looking like the good guy...if you have to be there". She realized that her attempt to convince the children did not succeed. Her decision to let the matter go, at least for the time being, was both understanding and perceptive, and also showed flexibility.

However, in spite of the fact that the children all agreed, Mrs. Carter was not willing to go so far as to include arms in the list of cat body parts.

At the conclusion of the second session Mrs. Carter had mentioned that the group was going to illustrate the book. Immediately, the children started to discuss who would do what pages, and showed obvious interest in the enjoyable task of drawing pictures.

Overall, Mrs. Carter felt more than satisfied with the lesson, as expressed in her journal when she wrote, "My hopes for this lesson were fulfilled. I was very happy with it." She also used the word "proud" in describing her feelings following the viewing of the lesson. She stated that she "could tell the children were with it because of the things they said - they all contributed something to the story. I could tell they were enjoying it by their body language - relaxed -", and that "they enjoyed the process". She also expressed her personal reaction to the session by stating, "It was very nice to work with four children. I saw more of their personalities, and they were freer with their opinions." When I asked whether she felt their thoughts were more accessible this way, she stated in her journal, "Yes - they are, definitely, simply because there is more air time for each child, and the shy child (or adult) will often share in a small, but not a large, group".

Mrs. Carter admitted to feeling "a bit defensive" during our first post-session discussion, however, she believed that "the criticisms were valid". I had made a point of only questioning her about her actions in order to have her be critical of herself, but had not directly criticized any actions at any point. However, the fact that she was aware of criticism makes it quite clear that she was indeed developing a critical stance of her own, supported by my questions and comments.

Session Three, May 8, 1992

Mrs. Carter began this session by reviewing all of the written notes that had been produced over the last few sessions. Since the session before, she had decided to put a "DRAFT" stamp on all of the pages written so far (figure 5), and she proceeded to explain this to the children. In her journal she wrote, "I told the boys and girls that I was going to put the draft stamp on the pages of our story because yesterday we wanted to change things and I didn't want to change them because I thought we were doing the final copy". Reflecting on this decision, Mrs. Carter wrote, "What did not go well - They did not seem to like my idea about the draft, one reason being they wanted to get on with the illustrations. I think it was too arbitrary, like coming down from on high," and, "What I would do differently - Not just impose the draft notion, but talk about it, and see what the children wanted to do."

Mrs. Carter read back the beginning part of the story to the children, while they joined in as they were able. Darren wanted to know if they would be doing pictures on the draft too. Mrs. Carter interpreted his comment this way in her journal, "They seemed preoccupied with doing the pictures and wanted to know if we could do the pictures on the draft". During the lesson, she never responded directly to Darren's question.

Mrs. Carter put commas in the appropriate places in the book, and in doing so, Darren was made aware of their use. In fact, upon noticing her do this, he commented, "Why is the comma in the same place?" She responded by saying, "because that's where the pause is, after the number".

Mrs. Carter went through the book page by page, checking for revisions they felt they wanted to make to the story thus far. For example, she asked them if they wanted to say "some eyes", or just "eyes". Darren did not seem to like the idea of having to do a second draft, and commented, "But we're not going to have to cross out, I can guarantee it". To this, Mrs. Carter responded, "What makes you so sure?"

It was obvious that Mrs. Carter was changing some of her behaviours as a result of the reflections made during the previous day's discussion. For example, at one point she attempted to get the children to add some descriptive words, however, they did not act on her suggestion, "Should we describe her tail? Describe her head?" Later, during discussion, she mentioned that she remembered feeling some disappointment about their lack of interest in adding more descriptive words to enhance the story. "I thought it was kind of boring." I now wonder whether their lack of interest in providing more description resulted from their not feeling enough ownership. I felt, at the time, that perhaps the children, being only grade one students, didn't fully understand the concept of "describing something", and upon mentioning this to Mrs.

Carter, she agreed that this may have been the case. Unfortunately, during the lesson, although she urged them to supply some description for the tail or the body, she didn't model for the children by providing the examples of "bushy tail" and "furry body". It was somewhat disappointing to me that this type of scaffolding was not utilized at the time, but in spite of this I recognized that the instructional decisions had to remain the teacher's, not mine.

As the group began to compose the remainder of the book, adding days four through ten (figure 5), it became apparent that they wanted to utilize rhymes, once again. Ideas such as "some sticks" for use with number six, "some went to heaven" for use with seven, and "grew a spine" for nine were all suggestions made by the children. During discussion, I asked Mrs. Carter why she didn't accept these rhymes for the book. She explained to me that the decision was "editorial" on her part and that had she accepted rhyming, they would have had to go off on another theme that would be nonsense. "It would take two or three more days and would need more editing."

In reflecting on the lesson, it was obvious that Mrs. Carter felt some disappointment. In discussion, she remarked that she "didn't think it was a great lesson" because it is so "hard to undo a mistake". She was referring to the draft issue we had discussed earlier. Mrs. Carter felt that the concept of the draft copy should have been introduced at the beginning. She stated one of her beliefs remarking that, "Six-year-olds are rather rigid in some ways. They want things to be consistently right. They aren't forgiving. The things that you do when you're starting something are important. You can't undo them with the kids. The kids know what you did. They expect you to do the same thing." Mrs. Carter felt very strongly that children are confused if you aren't consistent, and therefore, she was upset with her inconsistent behaviour. She felt that as a group they should have had a discussion of whether or not they wanted a draft.

During the discussion of this session Mrs. Carter focused more on the individual children than she had in the past. She reflected on this at the beginning of our conversation, commenting that, "Writing with a group this size is funny, because you see the human characteristics of the children more clearly. Their personalities come through more." As an example of what she meant she explained, "Heidi can be rather urbane at times - she is more free to say what she wants". I understood her to mean that she was able to get to know the children more personally than she was able to do in a large group. As a result of this realization, she began to analyze the reasons for individual children's behaviours in the group.

In her journal she recorded, "Ivan said very little today ". In fact, Ivan had been saying very little in every session up to this time. However, Mrs. Carter was now becoming more aware of this fact. She wrote, "He would answer if asked, but did not volunteer much. His mom is in the hospital with something quite serious. Maybe he is preoccupied." The next day, as she viewed episodes further on in the videotape, she noted, "Ivan seems to be a little bit sleepy in some ways. I think if things don't go just right its even more upsetting for him than for other children." She expressed her hopes, "Hopefully Ivan will come out a little bit", however, she did not mention how she might aid this. She also wondered whether Ivan felt ownership of the writing, and commented on his academic work in school, explaining that he was not a top achiever, because "he's too stiff" and this can "stultify his thinking".

She also noted behaviours of the other children, specifically that "Heidi contributes quite a few ideas" and that "Darren is very vocal and makes jokes", but in discussion she also noted that he "is conscious of being taped and he is feeling on the spot". In discussing Alecia, Mrs. Carter mentioned that she believes she has a "strong inner life". She referred to the fact that she had her little toys and things in her tummy pack (which she always had with her during the sessions). Mrs. Carter felt that these items "support her", since she received little support from the outside. I noted that Heidi seemed to feel secure with Mrs. Carter, and Mrs. Carter agreed, but felt that her family was more important than her friends, and that her toys acted as a sort of connection to them, while she was away at school. Mrs. Carter mentioned that she was happy with Alecia's participation in the small group, and felt that "being in a small group for her really makes a difference".

Mrs. Carter started to focus more on the Shared Writing process following this session. She made favorable comments about the process itself. For example she stated, "This is good for kids who keep to themselves", and, "It's a great way to get to know the children". She began to make informal plans for the remainder of the class stating, "I'd like to try this with each group". She had commented on the "rowdy" nature of this particular class and, therefore, she felt that "if you can do it with this class, you could do it with any class". She felt that it was important to "insist children leave you alone sometimes", referring to their ability to work without a teacher's intervention.

Mrs. Carter reflected on her level of input, and in discussion explained to me, "In terms of structure I probably have more input because I have more knowledge of story grammar. In terms of vocabulary, their input is strong."

Session Four, May 11, 1992

In her journal, Mrs. Carter wrote that she "felt encouraged" by the children's level of involvement during this lesson. She wrote that "some good thinking was displayed", and also mentioned that the children "were orderly". This was similar to the comment made on May 7, "Children were orderly, and listened to each other and me". She could not think of anything to write under her own heading, "What did not go well", although she mentioned that she would have done one thing differently, namely having Ivan sit beside her.

Mrs. Carter had mentioned during our most recent discussion that she wanted to try something in the non-fiction area, and presented this decision to them in the lesson by stating, "I thought for the next one we might do some non-fiction". The children accepted this, perhaps feeling they had no choice anyway.

In the journal, Mrs. Carter wrote, "This was a very open-ended lesson and I had no idea where it would go in terms of topic. So for that reason it was exciting, for me. I had thought it would be more research-y - going to look things up in books. I enjoyed it."

The group brain-stormed for possible writing ideas, with Mrs. Carter listing them as they arose. A variety of topics were suggested, including dinosaurs, China, hamsters, elephants, Barbies, earth and big and small (figure 7). Mrs. Carter, explained that they would finish off the cat story tomorrow (figure 6). Darren asked if today's work was "a draft of our ideas?" When Mrs. Carter told him that it was, he said, "Then we can write it down better". Whether he was referring to the content or the neatness of the written work is unclear. Later, when I asked Mrs. Carter about this, she too was unsure as to whether or not he was really sure about what a draft meant. In spite of this, she did not take any action to explain draft to Darren or the rest of the group in subsequent sessions.

The topic that was finally chosen was decided on by the teacher when she picked up on it specifically, saying "Big-small, that's an interesting idea!" In her reflective notes in the journal, she recalls, "So then we narrowed to big/small things".

Many comparisons of big and small items were suggested by the children, such as plywood and sliver. Mrs. Carter accepted these, questioning them when she felt it necessary, and recording them on paper (figure 8). Later, during videotape reviewing, she commented, "I think most of the suggestions came from them", and explained that she was "trying to get the comparisons into some kind of shape".

Alecia had difficulty focusing on the activity, and spent a lot of time gazing around. In our discussion, Mrs. Carter reflected on this and commented,"I tried to cajole or demand her attention. It didn't work at all. She just retreated further. I don't think I could get her to be more involved. Her level of involvement has improved a lot. Some children you can gently pressure and they get involved. She won't succomb to bullies or be forced to get more involved. Alecia is actually quite chatty out on the playground, but in big group lessons she is just out of it. You can't assume she isn't learning much just because she isn't involved."

Ivan showed more interest at the beginning of the session than in past sessions. However, when reviewing another portion of the videotape, Mrs. Carter noted, "Ivan's right out of that activity unfortunately. I guess I should have either had him more in the middle or something." In her journal she wrote, "Ivan talked more today - still mostly when asked. Alecia did not have any toys with her today - she took a paper and traced over letters for a while. Darren was chatty as usual - had some very good ideas and was very thoughtful. Heidi, quite vocal, has her own agenda sometimes - wants to achieve certain objectives." Those objectives were never identfied by Mrs. Carter however.

In her May 12 journal entry, commenting on the children's level of involvement, Mrs. Carter commented," I am happy about it. It is higher than in larger groups. I enjoy it. I wish we could have more of this more intimate contact."

Mrs. Carter guided the structure of the book, suggesting that they put their two word comparisons into sentences, later explaining, "We're going to take each comparison and put it on a page, or two, per page" (figure 9).

She invited the children's input asking, "What do we need to write non-fiction?" Darren responded, "Ideas". In our conversation later, Mrs. Carter said, "It was a very nice straightforward answer. He is the sort of perfect, I hate to say it, but boy, non-fiction type." Unfortunately, because she viewed this answer as straightforward, she did not pursue or develop the concept further with the children.

Other examples of inviting the children to provide their ideas included:"Are you happy with that comparison, trees-fleas? (Darren responded that it should be dinosaurs - fleas); "What should we compare our trees to Ivan?"; "So how should we say that?"

In a journal entry the next day, Mrs. Carter wrote more about her thoughts regarding control. She wrote, "I think there should be a shift in control... the more the children control it, as they are able, the more it will be useful to them. The question of how to handle the domineering Darren and the passive Alecia is one I am unsure of, as yet. Darren would just take over and then tell me how to run my life on top of it, if I let him." It was at this point that I noticed that she was beginning to have a slight shift in the way she viewed Darren's participation. This shift seemed to follow a comment of mine in which I wrote and asked if she thought his interest and enthusiasm was dominating? Her reflection on this eventually grew to incorporate the concept of "domineering", in a negative way, and this new attitude that she had formulated became evident during the next session.

Session Five, May 13, 1992

On this day, the group shared their "I Bought Some Toys" book with the rest of the class (figure 1). They were obviously proud of their book and all participated willingly. Mrs. Carter noted in her journal, "The children liked sharing". The rest of the class also appeared to enjoy listening to the book, and joining in the song. Following the presentation, the small group gathered back at their familiar meeting place to continue writing the Big and Small book (figure 9). At this time they all asked if they could take the book home to share with their parents. They agreed to take turns.

The session was much shorter than past sessions and because the children were accustomed to approximately 25-30 minute sessions at the table, they were somewhat confused by the length. Darren, commented, "Aw-w-w, small" and wondered why Mrs. Carter suggested they use the next ten minutes to participate in writer's workshop with the rest of the children, (while she went to record in her journal). Mrs. Carter appeared somewhat irritated, when Darren asked why she had to go and do her work, "Why can't you do that after we leave?" In any case, she was not in a cheerful mood, and this showed in her body language as well as her tone of voice. Mrs. Carter appeared rather agitated, impatient, and unresponsive. Her eye contact was limited. She was more focused on the rest of the class than she was on the small group. She was abrupt in her responses, moving away as she spoke. In fact, Mrs. Carter wrote in her journal, "I found Darren a bit obnoxious and presumptuous. I will need to talk to him tomorrow - about all the other kids in the class, etc. etc. "

During our discussion later on, she remarked, "This really made me mad", and, "Well, I leave the room before I hit Darren". I wonder if her irritation stemmed from a feeling of guilt at having cut the lesson short to attend to her personal writing. In reviewing the videotape, Mrs. Carter talked about this episode and remarked on how nowadays, in general, children express their ideas more freely than they used to. She was obviously not comfortable with this, and explained part of the reason for her feelings. In doing so, she provided some insight into the backgrounds of the children in the school she was teaching in. "I'm coming from a school where the children are poorer and not as presumptuous. This neighborhood is definitely upper middle class, not all kids are upper middle class. They talk about the heaters in their pools, what kills the algae. There are lots of doctors and people with their own businesses."

While reviewing the videotape, Mrs. Carter also remarked on her dissatisfaction with the seating arrangement for the group. She had alluded to this in past discussions as well. "I'm almost positive the round table will work better. It's a little more democratic. Spatial arrangements are important." Consequently, for the next session, the rectangular table had been replaced with a round one.

When we talked about the lesson, Mrs. Carter commented that usually, when reflecting on lessons, she doesn't remember all of the details because she's been teaching so long. If something is unusual, she remembers it. However, the viewing of her lessons on videotape was a way of drawing her attention to aspects that she may otherwise never have given much thought to.

Session Six, May 19, 1992

During this lesson, a round table was used instead of the usual rectangular one. The composition of the group was different since Ivan was absent from school. Mrs. Carter was facing Alecia in the new physical arrangement. In discussion, Mrs. Carter talked about the new seating arrangement. She felt the round table was an improvement, "because there is no head place, and kids aren't as likely to goof around and get sidetracked". As well, she reiterated that, "You can write better when you're at the table" (as opposed to the chalkboard or a chart stand).

During this lesson it became evident that Mrs. Carter was trying to include Alecia and receive more input from her. She looked at her and directed more comments to her than in past sessions. In order to tap into Alecia's interest, she suggested including Barbie in the book they were presently working on.

In her journal Mrs. Carter wrote, "I thought about group processing: part of the deal with getting Alecia to join in was to write something she was interested in - (Barbie). Then she spoke clearly and piped right up. Darren actually was quiet." In this session, Alecia related a whole story, unsolicited. Her story was listened to, but not included in the book. However, she did contribute other ideas to create a whole page in the book.

Mrs. Carter decided to include Heidi and Darren in her plan to get Alecia to contribute more to the group. At one point, when Darren interjected with a comment in answer to a question directed toward Alecia, Mrs. Carter cautioned him to, "Let Alecia speak", and following this, she asked Heidi and Darren, "Did you ever wonder why Alecia doesn't talk much in a group? Well I have." Darren wasn't sure what the reason could be, but Heidi suggested that perhaps Alecia is "shy", and noted that she is often very quiet in class. Mrs. Carter also asked Alecia why she was so quiet, but Alecia could not articulate her reasons for this. Mrs. Carter offered, "Maybe you don't need to". In our discussion, during the viewing of the video, Mrs. Carter elaborated, "I think I hit the nail on the head. Maybe you don't need to speak out. Maybe . She probably doesn't need to talk very much."

At one point, she tried to get Alecia to use description to distinguish a regular baby doll from a Barbie doll. Alecia had suggested doll and Barbie as a comparison, and Mrs. Carter wanted her to be more specific. In discussion she explained to me, "I wanted her to tell me if it was a baby doll or what - but she couldn't, so I went with it, otherwise it's not hers. She had no word to describe." Later, referring to the input Alecia did provide, Mrs. Carter also said, "If I had insisted that she fit into some pattern I wouldn't have gotten this out of her - well maybe, but it would have taken an hour." Later, in discussion, Mrs. Carter mentioned that Alecia had been encouraged in the Shared Writing.

Mrs. Carter seemed to be somewhat irritated by Darren during other times in this session. At one point, when Darren began to relate an interesting story, on the topic they were discussing, Mrs. Carter began to listen but never really appeared truly interested. In fact, part way through his story, she looked away to reprimand someone in the larger group. Darren took this action in his stride, but looked rather confused, and it would be understandable if he felt that his ideas were not being well received at that point. Later, Darren suggested comparing a boulder to the White Rock (on the beach in White Rock, B.C.), but Mrs. Carter totally disregarded this suggestion as well. Later, when I asked why she chose not to include this descriptive comparison, she said she didn't use it, "because I forgot it". During one episode, Darren leaned over to Alecia to tell her what to say, (probably in an attempt to be nice and helpful). However, when Mrs. Carter noticed this in the video, she commented by saying, "Oh, what a puke". And then a few seconds later she added, "I think she's resisting him".

Darren was still not satisfied with the large - teeney comparison, which he had also pointed out to Mrs. Carter during the last session. He had an inherent awareness that somehow it did not fit with the other comparisons generated so far. He of course was unaware that these words were adjectives, while the other words were nouns. His way of explaining the difference, was to compare large - teeney to big - small used in the title. Mrs. Carter did finally deal with this issue, by removing them from the list, but she did not elaborate on her reasons, or attempt to discuss the concept further with Darren. Later, in discussion, she stated, "This is a good way to deal with Darren. Just to agree with him and whatever he says. That way he just shuts up." When I mentioned to her that he had pursued that problem a couple of times in the past, she commented, "I should get him to explain that more" and agreed with me that he probably wanted her to do some editing with him.

Mrs. Carter herself felt rather badly about the episode, and in her journal following the lesson, recorded, "What could have been improved: I need to learn to put the velvet glove on. I felt frustrated with Darren's always dominating, or trying to dominate, and so was perhaps too brutal, or harsh." Later, in the journal, she elaborated on this with, "I am sometimes too abrupt with the children, and too blunt. I could be more polite and ask more than tell. I think it would help class dynamics."

Mrs. Carter demonstrated that she was beginning to focus more on group dynamics in other ways as well. Commenting on group dynamics, in her journal, she reflected, "They changed over the 3 weeks. The kids regressed to the mean of assertion." She also recorded, "This is an important aspect of Shared Writing (group dynamics) because in any shared endeavour the group must 'get it together' ... a school staff, a baseball team. Social learning may be more important than academic learning - many employers seem to think so ... so perhaps the social benefits are more important than the academic in Shared Writing. So, for Darren and Heidi to think about Alecia was very important - we should model thoughtful social behaviour as teachers and give kids a chance to practice it. (ie. Shared Writing.)"

Later, in her journal, Mrs. Carter wrote, "A small group is really important for the more passive, quiet child - easier, less threatening for them to participate. More verbal, bossy children benefit too, because the teacher's presence, and reminders, can help them remember to allow the quiet child to share."

Mrs. Carter expressed her feelings about this session in this way. "I thought today was more about the group than the writing. I felt very happy that Alecia had contributed, and Darren and Heidi seemed to reflect a bit on the why's of her quietness. I also thought they were dealing with decision making - they made statements about it as we decided what to say, write what to do next, etc."

Mrs. Carter later wrote more about decision making stating, "This is a critical aspect of writing - a writer is constantly making decisions about what to include, what to omit, how to improve, which word to use. This strategy helps you to articulate this process - 'say it out loud'."

I noticed that this session included several discussions that were off the topic. I inquired about this, wondering how it affected the writing. In her journal Mrs. Carter responded, "Off the topic discussions are probably inevitable in Shared Writing, if not necessary. I don't think a temporary loss of focus hurts the writing: Also, who is to judge as whether it is off the topic. If a person has an active mind, many things could be either on or off depending on the synopses. I don't know how it affects the writing. How could one tell?"

Referring to the written product, Mrs. Carter said that she, "can't stand it because it is so illogical. I can't stand the structure, but I don't change it because these words are somebody's." It was as if she was afraid to input at times, while at other times her input was rather overwhelming.

She talked more about control, explaining that "for the children to have more control over the writing, I would talk a lot less. Then my concern would be that someone would take over. That's what I would be really concerned about. You would have to think about who you put together in the group. The personalities are really important. Some children are very difficult in any group because they are so egocentric." She did not specifically mention Darren when she said this, but I wonder if she was referring to him.

Mrs. Carter went on to talk more about the issue of control, and her beliefs regarding the matter. She mentioned that, "We are under lots of constraint in schools". She referred specifically to those constraints as being time, parents, administrators, and her own level of comfort in the classroom. She stated, "I can't function if it gets too out of control. I don't want to. I don't know if it's good for children. I just feel very uncomfortable. There are kids here who need more liberty and freedom, and I feel sorry for them, because others need more control. I have tried to change my style. Sometimes people have said I am too authoritarian, but it doesn't work for me. It has to do with many things - your own upbringing, your practicum, a lot of things. I feel more comfortable about what I do now. I couldn't wait for them to internalize self-control. They need structure. Dysfunctional families do not have structure and sometimes... You listen to your own children and what they like in a teacher. They like kindness, gentleness, structure."

Mrs. Carter talked about the process of Shared Writing, and the ways she incorporated some of the ideas into her other teaching. The logistics of the Shared Writing process were discussed as well. "I would insist on a no access rule for other kids because they can solve their problems." She told me that she had carried the small group activity idea into the other parts of her school day. For example, she decided to work with a small group in mathematics, since doing the Shared Writing activity. She included a reference to this in a later journal entry, writing, "I like the fact that the class has had to solve their own problems during the taping, and they could. This awareness has freed me to do more other small group work in math, too." She also gave some thought to what couldn't be used in the future. "What couldn't be incorporated is spending this much time with one group because it wouldn't be fair to the others. It is a luxury to spend this much time with one group."

Session Seven - May 21, 1992

The children shared their two books with the rest of the class today. Mrs. Carter felt positive about the sharing time, mentioning in her journal that Ivan and Alecia both participated more than at the beginning of all of the sessions. She wrote, "The children are keen about their writing - they want to share it".

Mrs. Carter was also happy about what happened once the small group was back at their table. "We did some editing of language on p. 8, as opposed to merely correcting spelling, which is important, but mundane. Language is much more interesting." Later, when reviewing the videotape, she also commented, "I was happy when we edited that page, I was delighted".

She could not think of anything that could have been improved about the lesson, although she wrote, "I'm sure there is something but I can't think of it".

She wrote about some of her thoughts following this session. "Children are very capable of doing lots of things, although not perfectly and not the way we would as adults. The whole issue of control and self-control, is one I will be thinking about for a while, along with discipline. I like the name Shared Writing - and I think I'd like to share more in the classroom in many senses of the word."

After viewing the videotape of this session, Mrs. Carter commented on the increased attention she paid to Ivan. During the lesson, she had said, "Let's let Ivan pick one to write about", trying to encourage his participation. She explained that this move was a deliberate action on her part. This behaviour was a result of her reflection on past lessons.

At one point, Alecia contradicted Darren, and Mrs. Carter was pleased to see this, giving "three cheers for Alecia".

An example of Mrs. Carter relinquishing some of her control came when she accepted the story title chosen by the children for the final draft, "Some Things are Bigger than Others" (figure 10). She did not think it was a particularly good one. In discussion, she commented, "I thought that was a dumb title, but I said to the kids it is a nice title".

It was obvious from this session, that Mrs. Carter did not have the same high level of energy or interest in the activity. She explained herself in regard to this, even without any questioning on my part. "I'm withdrawing a bit now because I know it's coming to a close and I think the kids have some sense of this. I'm not as into it as I was three sessions ago. I've lost touch with what the other kids are doing. I don't have the same feeling but I have the same thoughts. Like everything, it ebbs and flows."

Mrs. Carter reflected on how she would handle another group, if she decided to do Shared Writing with them. Indeed, she did plan to utilize the process with the small group of children she was using in her own research. "I'd have to pick the children ... and be open to the possibility it might not go the way I thought it would. As long as you are getting their language down on paper and they are thinking of the writing process."

VII. Discussion of the Data

Throughout the study Mrs. Carter operated from her personal theories and beliefs. These were derived from her practical knowledge obtained from observations of students, family, and personal childhood experiences. Through the process of self-reflection, Mrs. Carter altered some of her teaching strategies. However, there were also examples of her resistance to change, despite her realization that some change may be beneficial to the children.

The following highlights from the reported findings illustrate how, at times, Mrs. Carter was successful in initiating change, and how at other times, she resisted change.

Teacher Influence on Content and Structure

Children's need to satisfy their personal or social interests influences how they learn to write (Altwerger, Edelsky & Flores, 1987; Cazden, 1982; Shanklin, 1991; Zola, 1989). Throughout the Shared Writing sessions it was apparent that Darren, Heidi, Ivan, and Alecia were seeking to express their personal intentions and ideas. For example, this was exhibited by their proposals to introduce certain subjects and structures, like "Barbie", and rhyming.

Mrs. Carter's refusal to incorporate rhyming into the story inhibited the creative process. The children continued to reintroduce rhyming as a structure for the story even though Mrs. Carter maintained that they had decided, as a group, not to use rhymes. The failure to bring closure to this aspect of the writing frustrated the children by preventing them from pursuing their intentions. It distracted them from Mrs. Carter's intentions as well. This inhibited their ability to use patterns of language that seemed to come naturally to them. This is illustrative of Dyson's assertion that tensions arise when teachers attempt to guide children's efforts in a manner inconsistent with the children’s intentions (Dyson, 1990).

Alternatively, Mrs. Carter reflected on her earlier reluctance to use "Barbie" as a topic. Through viewing of the videotapes, she observed that the topic of "Barbies" kept reappearing, even though she had previously redirected the writing from this topic, on several occasions. In subsequent Shared Writing sessions she altered her behaviour, thus encouraging more creative input. This was demonstrated by Alecia's more intense involvement in the Shared Writing process. Interestingly, Mrs. Carter recognized Alecia's renewed interest as being directly linked to her having a personal interest in the topic.

Scaffolding vs. Control

The practice of supporting or scaffolding learners to enable them to take risks and grow in their writing ability has been discussed by numerous researchers and educators (Bruner, 1978; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Feuerstein, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978). Unfortunately however, in their efforts to scaffold children's learning, teachers' intentions and voices often overshadow those of the children they teach (Cazden, 1985; Juliebö, 1985; Searle, 1984). It appears that adult support is only effective if the intentions of the adult and child are reciprocal (Cazden, 1985; Dyson, 1990; Juliebö, 1985; Searle, 1984; John-Steiner & Tatter, 1983). Dyson and Genishi (1983) state, "Children are often limited to fitting into the teacher's interpretive context, rather than supported in creating their own" (p. 754).

Although Mrs. Carter appeared to be open and receptive to the children's ideas it became apparent that her acceptance of their ideas was in many respects limited by her own ideas of what the story was going to contain.

The children were obviously proud of the written products, illustrating a certain degree of ownership on the part of the children. This was demonstrated by their enthusiastic participation during the whole class sharing times and their desire to take the book home to share with their families. However, each child's sense of ownership seemed to be derived from different sources. For example, in Ivan and Alecia's cases, their sense of ownership was likely rooted in membership and identification with the group, since their input to the books was limited largely to passive acceptance of others' ideas. In contrast, Darren and Heidi offered more of their own ideas, and therefore, had significantly more influence on the content of the final products.

In spite of this, however, it was apparent that Mrs. Carter had a pervasive and overpowering influence on the writing. She went beyond providing support to exerting control. In her attempts to provide the children with the structure she felt they needed in their writing, she not only supported the children's efforts, but controlled to the point of limiting the expression of their ideas in the finished product.

Incorporating an important aspect of the Shared Writing process, Mrs. Carter undertook to model and voice certain techniques of writing, such as her references to using scratch paper, making rough notes and lists, and referring to them in her writing. However, she also took it upon herself to edit out those ideas that she found did not fit with what she felt the books should contain. Furthermore, she "fished" for the exact words she had in mind. At times this "fishing" strategy was successful in meeting her objectives (cat's body), whereas at other times it was not, (baby doll/Barbie comparison).

In her journal Mrs. Carter commented on the issue of control over the writing, stating that she felt she had more control than the children in regard to structure, while they had more control in regard to ideas and vocabulary. She did not seem to recognize her "fishing" for the words and ideas she wanted to have included in the books as a way of controlling ideas.

In her reflections, Mrs. Carter made other comments that can be related to the notion of scaffolding. She viewed her role as being necessarily supportive and controlling. It became apparent however, that through reflection during discussion, and in her journal, Mrs. Carter actually began to focus on and confront her own ideas of control. Comments such as "coming down from on high" and "impose" were used by Mrs. Carter to describe some of her interactions. In one entry in her journal she revisited a session and commented, quite insightfully, "I could have said 'Let's plan that later'. I don't know why they wanted to illustrate so badly - maybe it's because they are in control of that part - I am pretty much in control of the writing, the ultimate control."

Teacher Change and Critical Self-Reflection

Reflecting, a month later, Mrs. Carter wrote in her journal about the idea of shifting control again, stating, "The basic tenet of shift - teacher attitude! - Because this is new to me - a new modus operandi would need to be developed. Usually the children are in charge of their writing and I am in charge of my writing - this is different. 2nd tenet - group dynamics - hard for some children to share (ie. Darren and perhaps Heidi)." It seemed that Mrs. Carter was somehow aware that there should be a shift in control, but that she was unable to undertake it easily, because of years of taking control in the classroom. She was acknowledging her need for support.

By engaging in critical self-reflection Mrs. Carter has embarked on a complex process of change. Mrs. Carter missed some valuable opportunities in scaffolding the children's learning, but through reflection she came to understand at a cognitive level some of these missed opportunities. Being able to change at a practical level will take time, interaction and support of others, and more reflection (Fay, 1977; Friere, 1970; Fullan, 1982; Stephens, 1987; Wilcox, 1982).

Mrs. Carter expressed on several occasions her positive attitude toward the process of Shared Writing. She stated, "I will definitely try to incorporate some of this into my teaching for the rest of the year and next year". In my opinion, Mrs. Carter's greatest opportunity lies in capitalizing on her capability and willingness to engage in further reflection. By doing so she will develop her ability to link into the children's intentions and meanings in order to support their efforts and help them discover the joys of writing.

Significance of the Study

I expect that this research has produced knowledge of value to the teacher participant, to myself, and to the educational community.

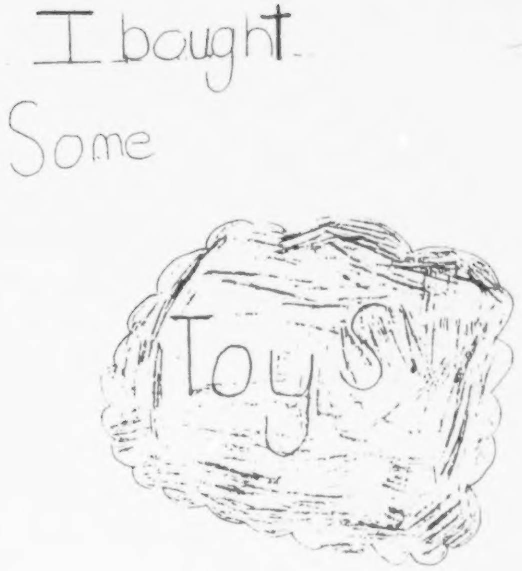
With respect to the value for the teacher participant, Mrs. Carter, Bolster (1983) states that teachers who participate in studies similar to this one have "achieved insights into problematic dimensions of their instruction that they believe would otherwise have been unavailable to them" (p. 306) and that identifiable changes in teachers' pedagogy have been the result. Fay (1977), Gitlin (1990), Lather (1986), and Smith (1989) all recommend this form of educative research. In fact, Bolster (1983) believes that of all the models of research he knew, "this model has the greatest potential for generating knowledge that is both useful and interesting to teachers" (p. 305).

Fay (1977), and Gitlin (1990) both extol the value of dialogue between researchers and participants. Fay (1977) advocates "rational reflection" and "persuasion through discourse" as viable processes that lead to change (p. 224-231). This concept is in striking contrast to the manipulative, authoritative way new curriculum and methods are often presented to teachers who are viewed frequently as low-level managers. Of course, this dynamic way of researching that has as its intent, change, is inconsistent with "the established ethnographic norm that the researcher should influence the behaviour and attitudes of the subjects as little as possible" (Gitlin, 1990).

In describing the more widespread value of this type of research Sumara & Walker (1991) state:

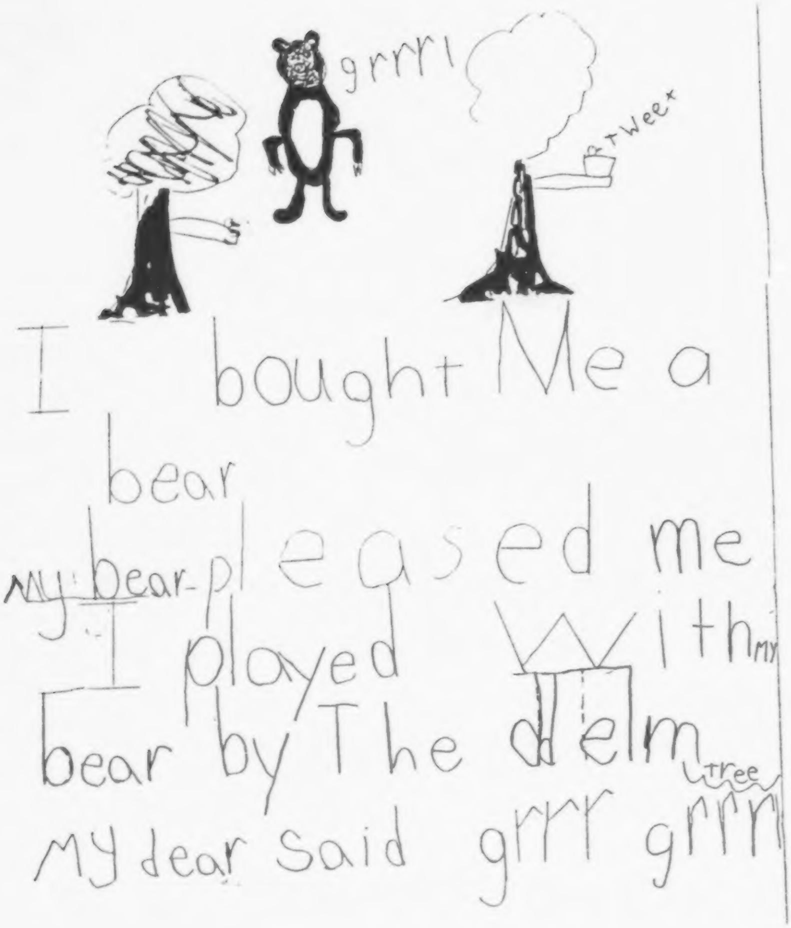
> ...examining cases of whole language practice...will help to create a stronger bridge between the theoretical language that describes whole language and the understanding of that language which teachers demonstrated in their classrooms. If whole language is to grow as a reform movement, examples of this translation of theoretical knowledge into practical knowledge must become known by teachers. The language of practice may also be more reassuring than the language of theory to the skeptics and critics. Although differences in practice are likely to be seen, the elaboration of how these differences occurred will help to create a more precise and meaningful language about whole language that will facilitate greater understanding among its proponents. (p. 284-286)

This study not only provides a critical description leading to options for teacher behaviour during Shared Writing implementation, but it also illuminates how a teacher can begin to develop a critically reflective stance, in order to enhance further professional development. Change will only occur, and guidelines will only be of practical use, when teachers confront critically, and judge, their own underlying belief systems and alter them as they deem necessary. Through heightened awareness, teachers may eventually gain control over their own actions and become empowered and able to act more autonomously. Prescriptions alone are ineffective. Each teacher is a unique person. Mrs. Carter was an expert teacher and the structure of this project provided scaffolding which enabled her to engage in a reflective stance. The videotapes and audiotapes facilitated in-depth reflection as teaching episodes were revisted. This research design was successful as a process for investigating teacher change. My interpretation evolved from repeated examinations of the videotapes, audio recordings, conversations with Mrs. Carter, and readings of the journals. Through this process I learned a great deal about the intricacies of scaffolding versus control.



I bought
Some
Toys

Figure 1: The First Story
(p. 1 of 7)



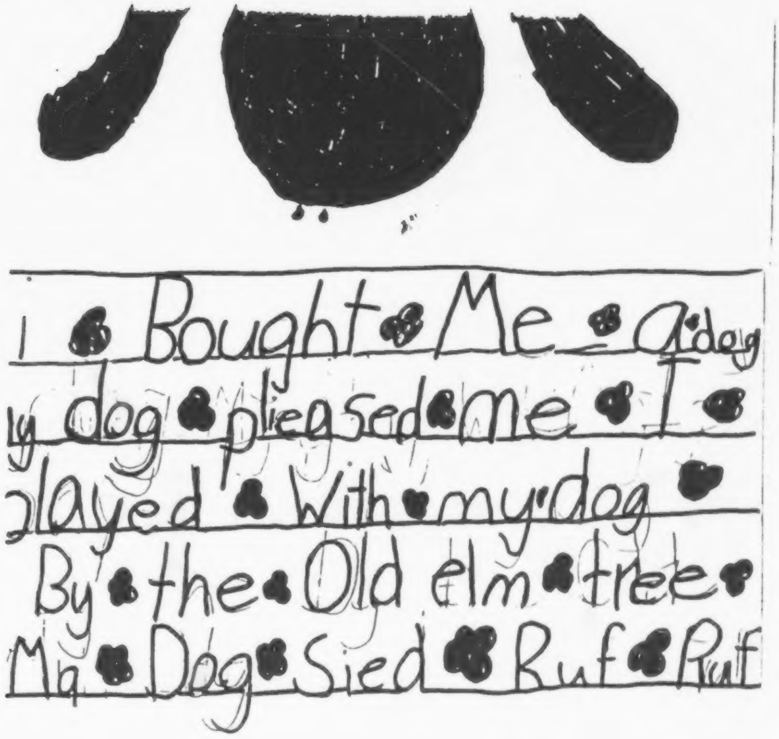
I bought Me a bear

my bear pleased me

I played with my bear by The d elm tree

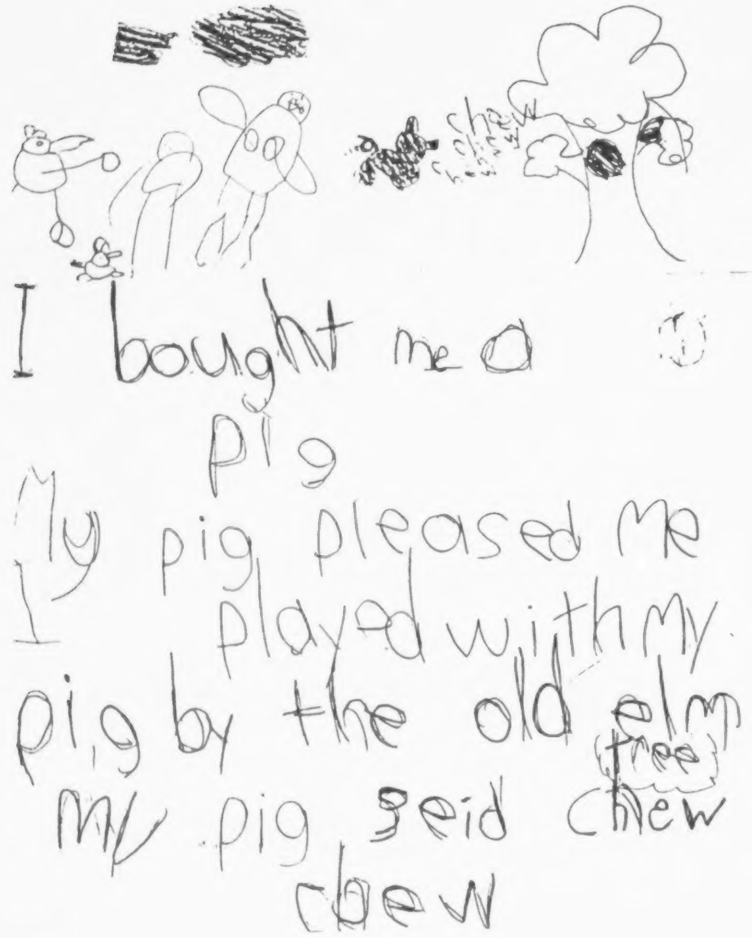
MY dear Said grrr grrr

Figure 1: The First Story
(p. 2 of 7)



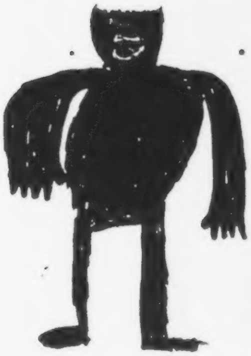
I Bought Me a dog
y dog pliegsed me I
layed With my dog
By the Old elm tree
Ma Dog Sied Ruf Ruf

Figure 1: The First Story
(p. 3 of 7)



I bought me a
pig
My pig pleased me
I played with my
pig by the old elm
tree
my pig seid chew
chew

Figure 1: The First Story
(p. 4 of 7)

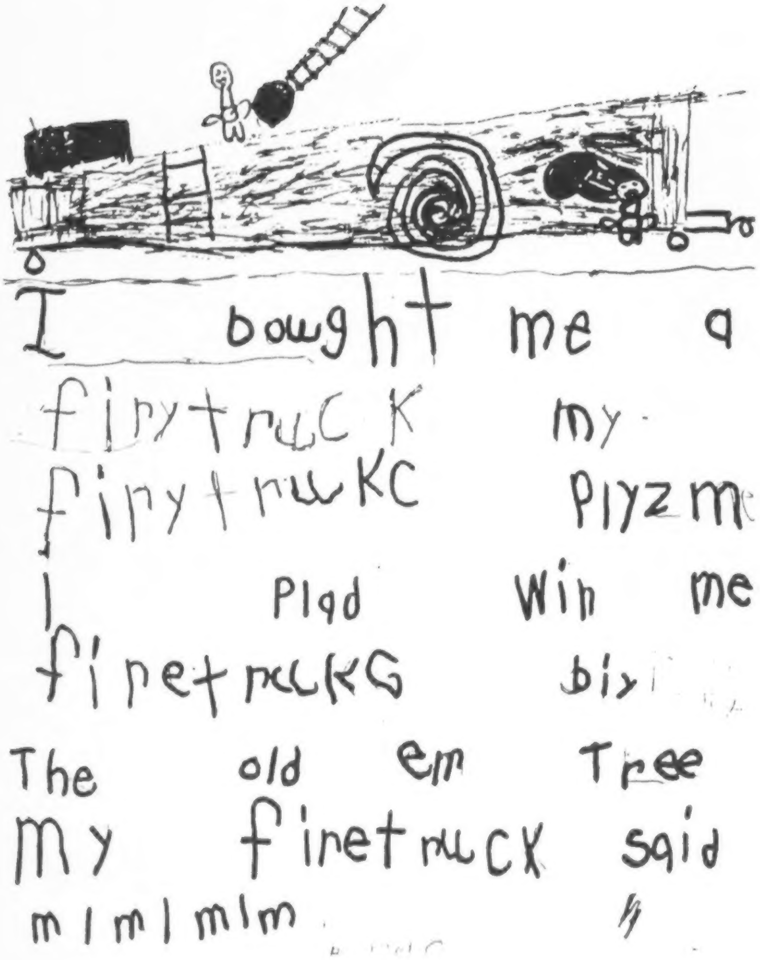


I Bought me a gorilla

my gorilla Pleased me

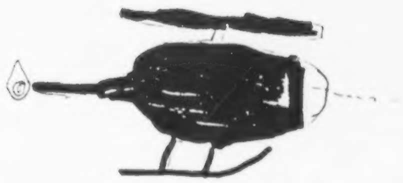
I Played WITH my gorilla
by the old elm tree
my gorilla said uuuuuv

Figure 1: The First Story
(p. 5 of 7)



I bought me a
firytruck my
firytruckc plyzme
I plad win me
firetruckG bix
The old em Tree
my finetruck said
mimlmlm "

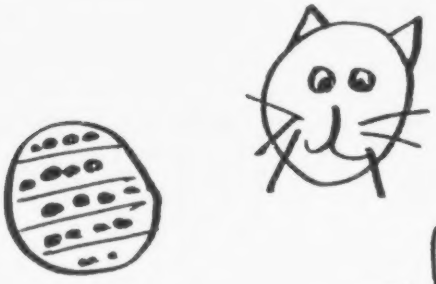
Figure 1: The First Story
(p. 6 of 7)



I bought me a
helicopter,
My helicopter pleased
me.
I flew my helicopter
by the old elm tree
My helicopter said p-p-p-t-t-t

Figure 1: The First Story
(p. 7 of 7)

Barby
The Amazing
Cat Seed



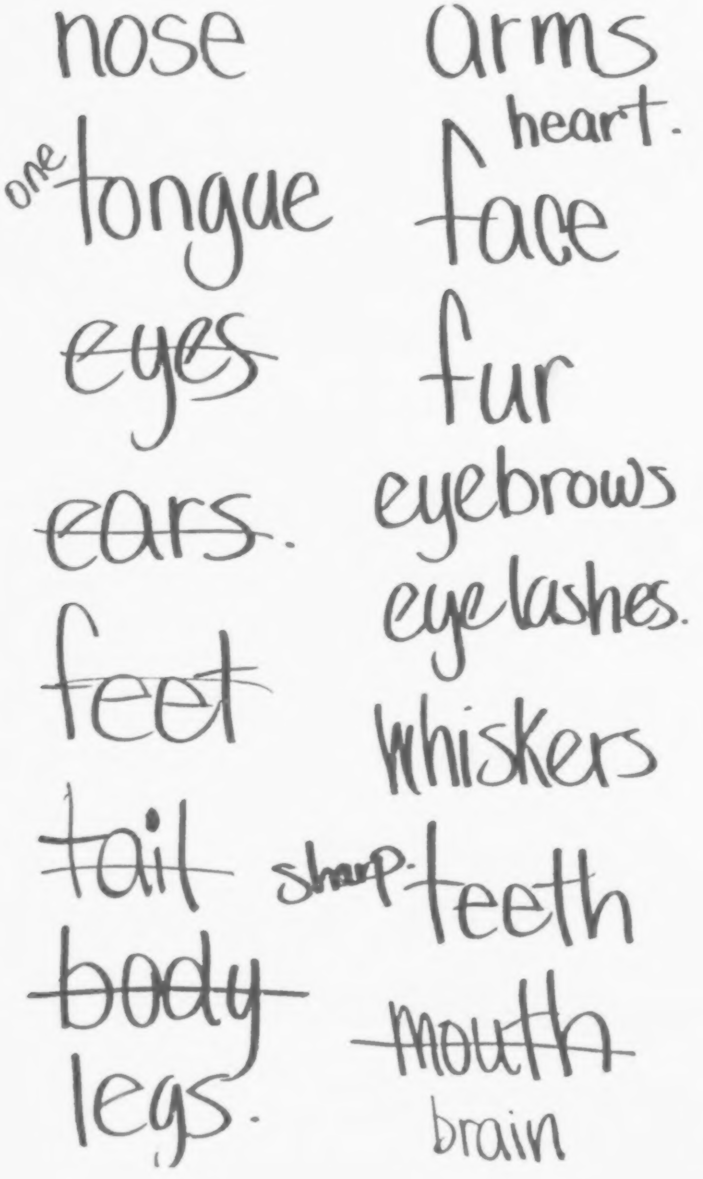
- food
- floor
- garden

Figure 2: The Ideas for the Second Story

Barbies

Ken
Skipper
Living Pretty Barby
Beauty Queen
Barbie
Midge

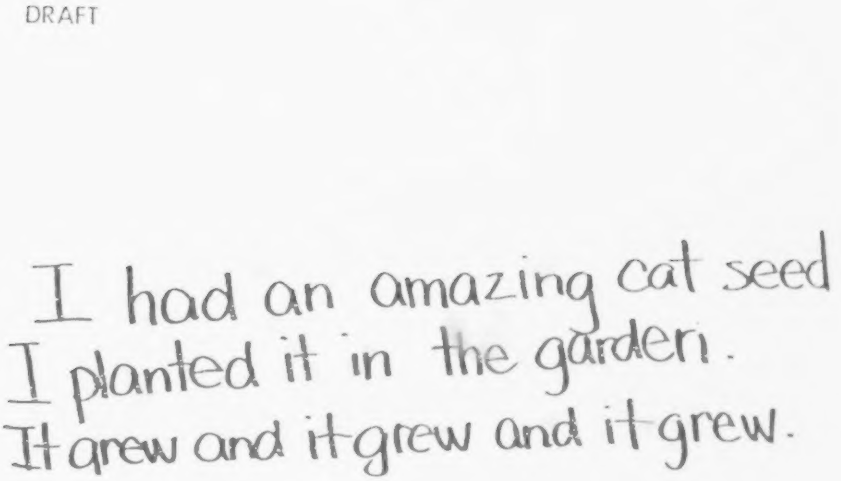
Figure 3: The Scratch Paper for Recording Rough Notes



nose
one tongue
~~eyes~~
~~ears~~.
~~feet~~
~~tail~~
~~body~~
legs.

arms
heart.
face
fur
eyebrows
eyelashes.
whiskers
sharp: teeth
~~mouth~~
brain

Figure 4: The List of Things the Cat Seed Had to Grow



DRAFT

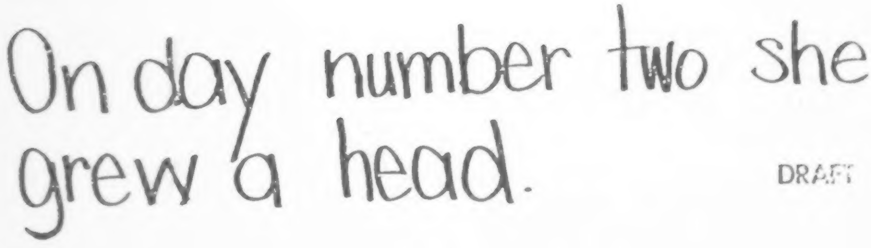
I had an amazing cat seed
I planted it in the garden.
It grew and it grew and it grew.

Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 1 of 12)

Onday number one, she grew a body.

DRAFT

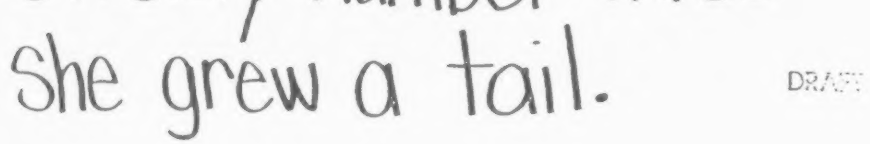
Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 2 of 12)



On day number two she
grew a head.

DRAFT

Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 3 of 12)



On day number three
she grew a tail.

DRAFT

Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 4 of 12)

On day number four, she grew ~~feet~~ legs

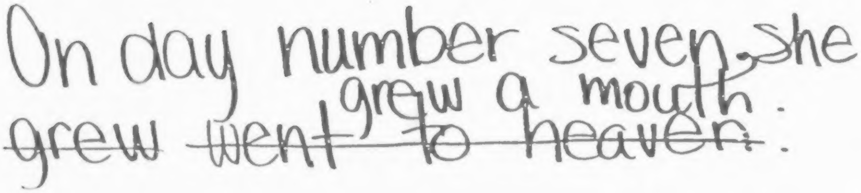
Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 5 of 12)

On day number five, she
grew some eyes.

Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 6 of 12)

On day number six, she
grew [illegible] a couple of ears.

Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 7 of 12)



On day number seven, she
grew a mouth.
~~grew~~ ~~went to heaven.~~ .

Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 8 of 12)

On day number eight, she grew a tongue.

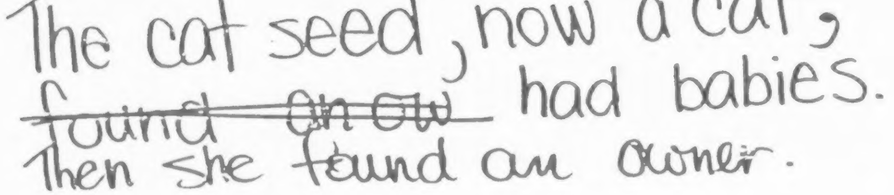
Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 9 of 12)

On day number nine, she grew fur.

Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 10 of 12)

On day number ten, she
grew ~~legs.~~ feet.

Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 11 of 12)



The cat seed, now a cat,
~~found an ow~~ had babies.
Then she found an owner.

Figure 5: The First Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 12 of 12)

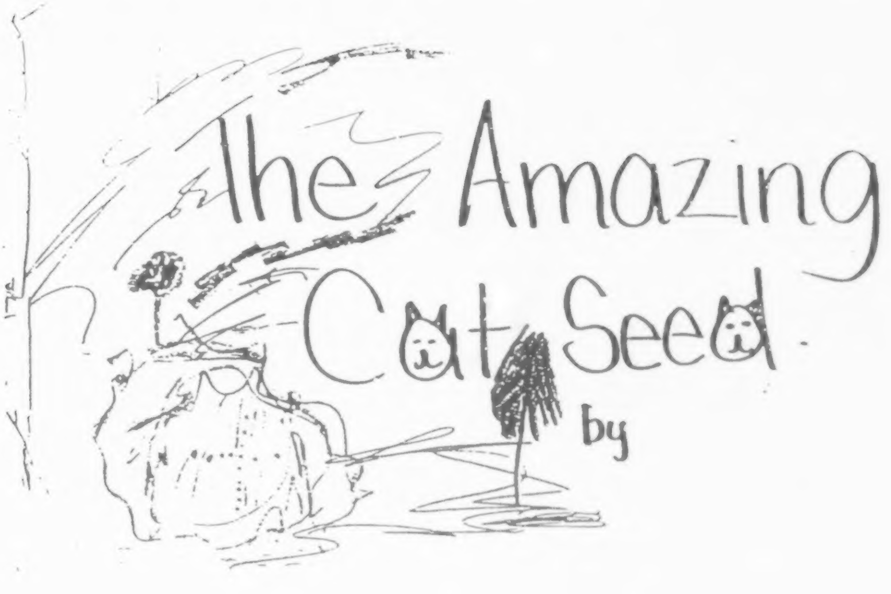
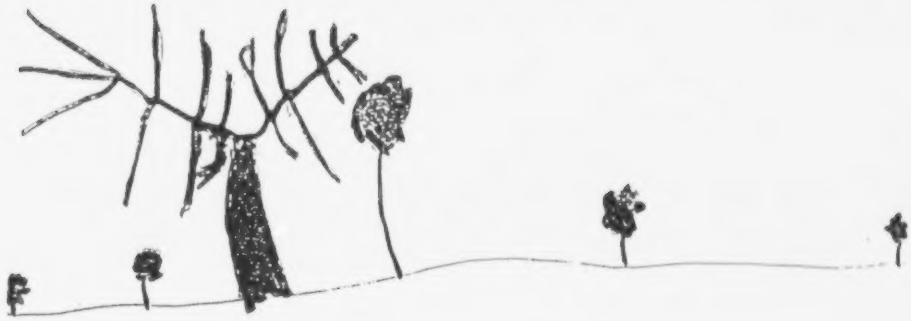
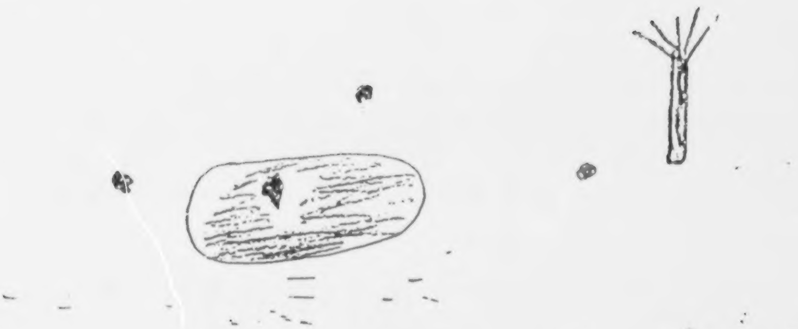

The Amazing
Cat Seed
by

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 1 of 13)



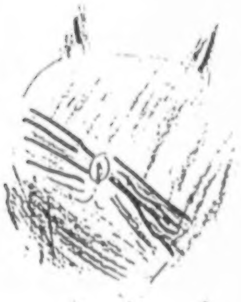
I had an amazing cat seed.
I planted it in the garden.
It grew and it grew and it grew

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 2 of 13)



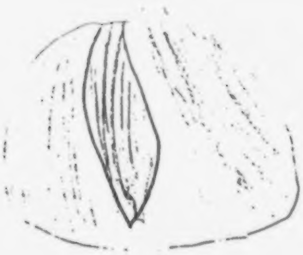
On day number one, she grew
a body.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 3 of 13)



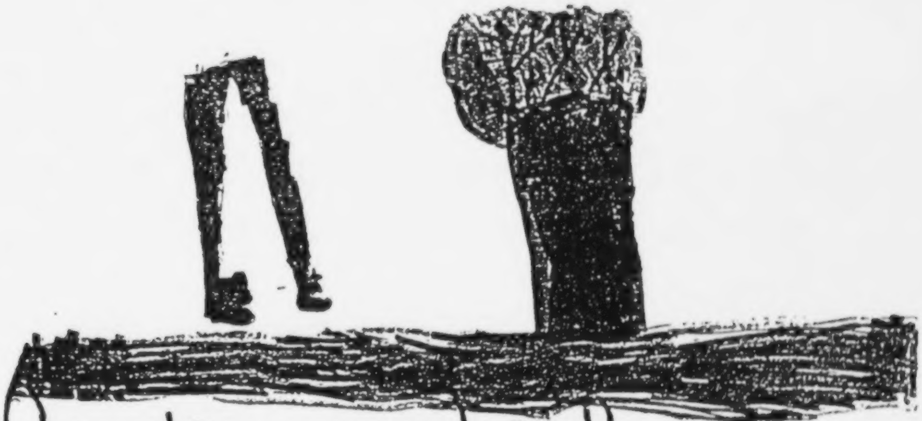
On day number two,
she grew a head.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 4 of 13)



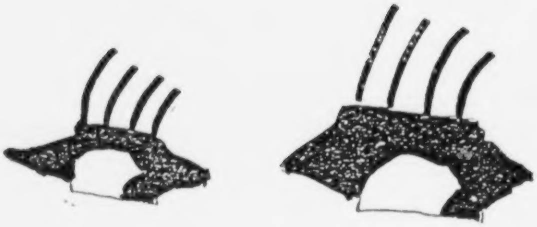
On day number three,
she grew a tail.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 5 of 13)



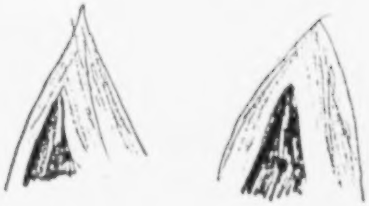
On day number four,
She grew legs.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 6 of 13)



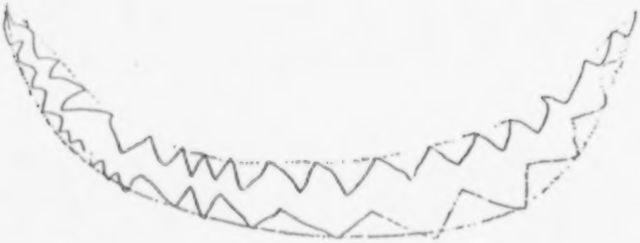
On day number five,
She grew some eyes.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 7 of 13)



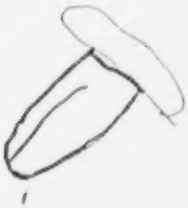
On day number six,
she grew ears.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 8 of 13)



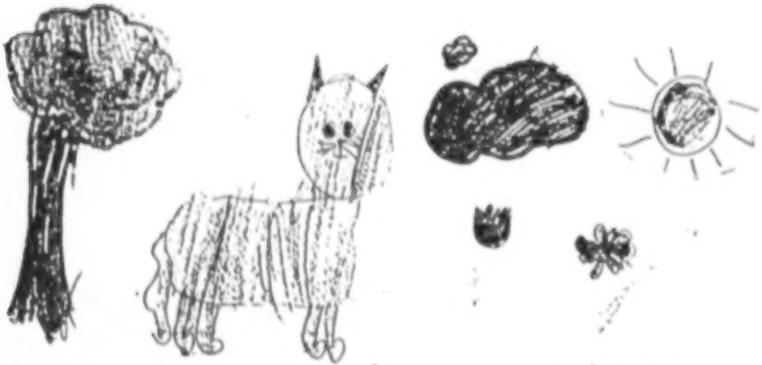
On day number seven,
she grew a mouth.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 9 of 13)



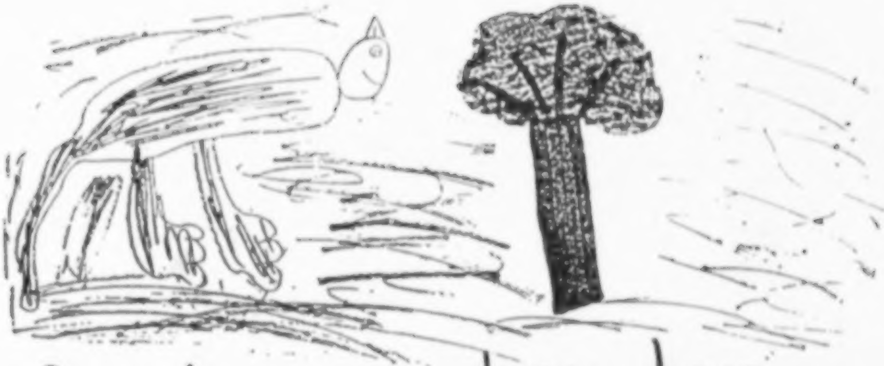
On day number eight,
She grew a tongue.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 10 of 13)



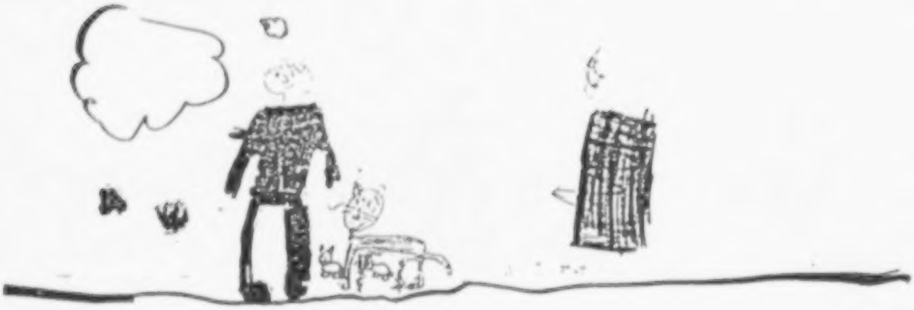
On day number nine,
she grew fur.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story
(p. 11 of 13)



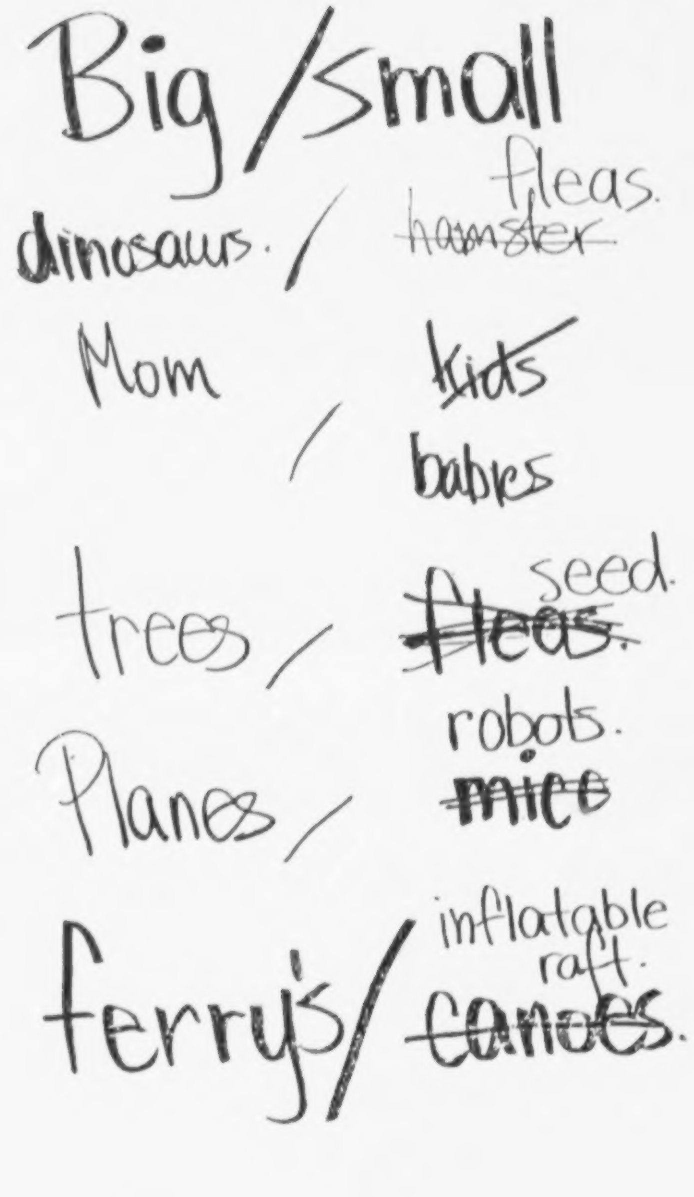
On day number ten, she grew feet.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 12 of 13)



On the last day she grew more kittens and they all found an owner, and lived happily ever after.

Figure 6: The Final Draft of *The Amazing Cat Seed* Story (p. 13 of 13)



Big /small

dinosaurs. / ~~hamster~~ fleas.

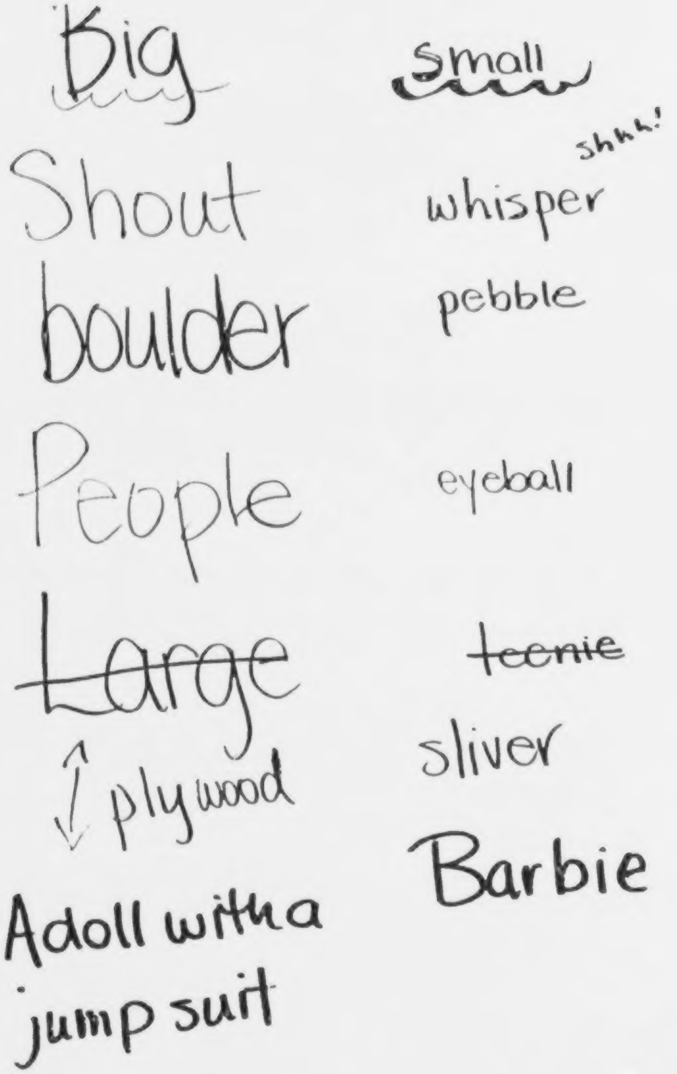
Mom / ~~kids~~ babies

trees / ~~fleas.~~ seed.

Planes / ~~mice~~ robots.

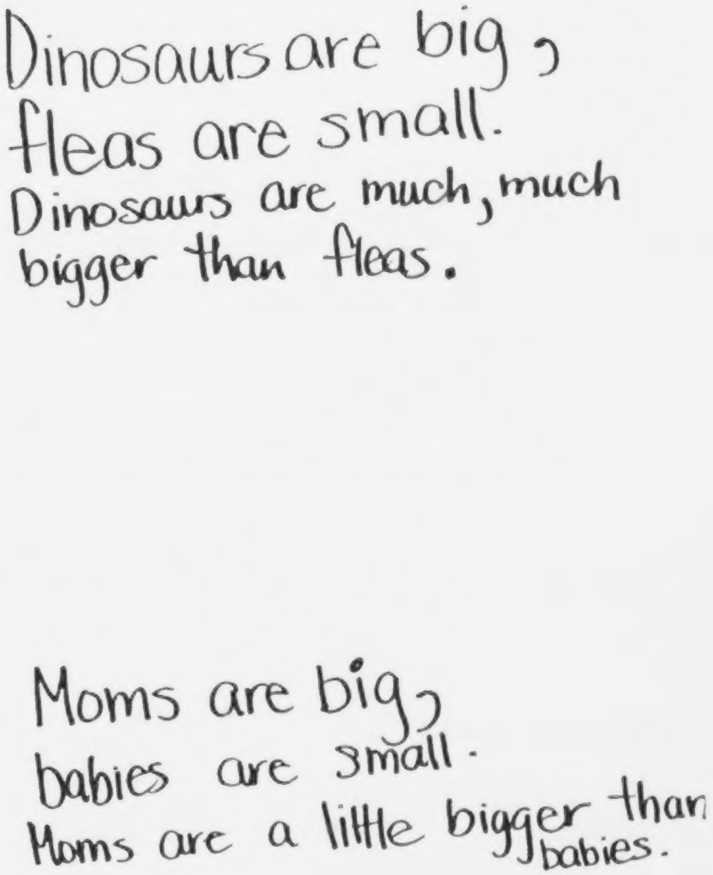
ferry's/ ~~canoes~~. inflatable raft.

Figure 7: The Topics Suggested for the Third Story



Big	small
Shout	whisper shhh!
boulder	pebble
People	eyeball
~~Large~~	~~teenie~~
↕ plywood	sliver
Adoll witha jump suit	Barbie

Figure 8: The Scratch Paper of Ideas for the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story



Dinosaurs are big,
fleas are small.
Dinosaurs are much, much
bigger than fleas.

Moms are big,
babies are small.
Moms are a little bigger than babies.

Figure 9: The First Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story (p. 1 of 4)

Some
Seeds grow bigger and
bigger, and they grow
into trees.

Barbies are small cause
they're Barbie dolls.
Dolls are bigger than Barbie.
cause they're stuffed.

Figure 9: The First Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story (p. 2 of 4)

A shout is very loud,
and a whisper is very
5. soft.

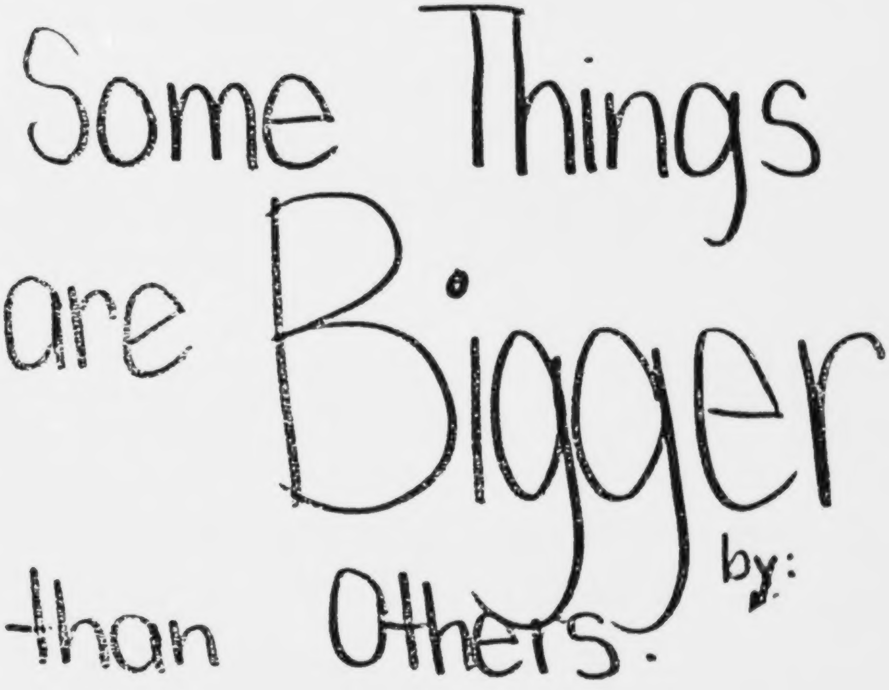
A boulder is large, large,
large [illegible], and a pebble
is [illegible]. this small.o
6.

Figure 9: The First Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story
(p. 3 of 4)

A frog is bigger than
a fly. Frogs like
7. eating flies.

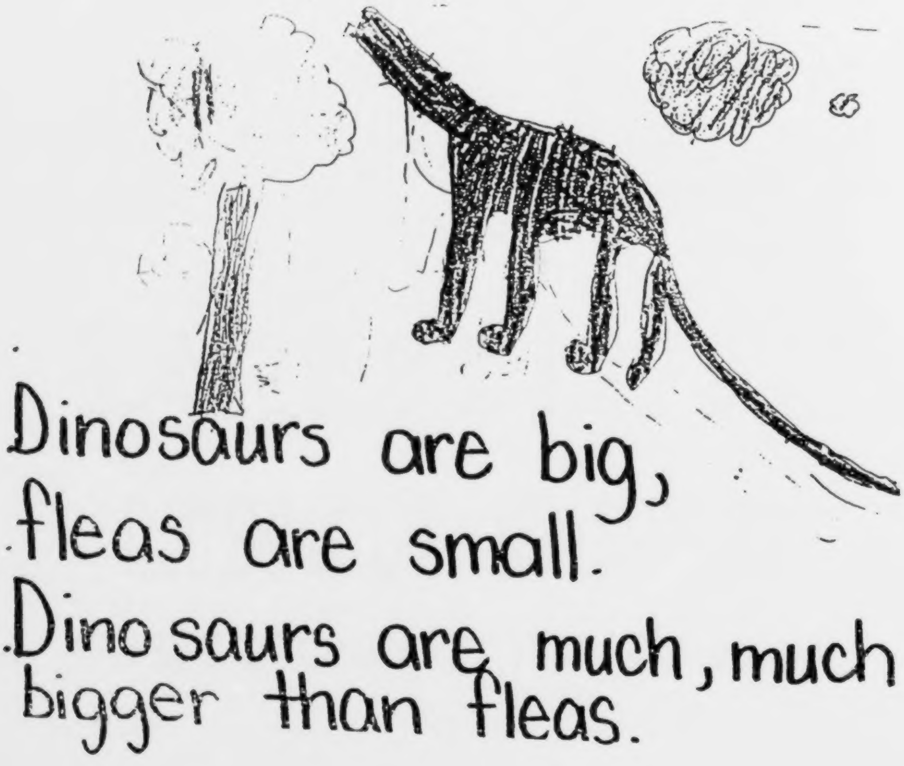
Planes ~~fly~~ are ~~pretty~~
~~big compared to~~ robots.
8. much much bigger than

Figure 9: The First Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story (p. 4 of 4)



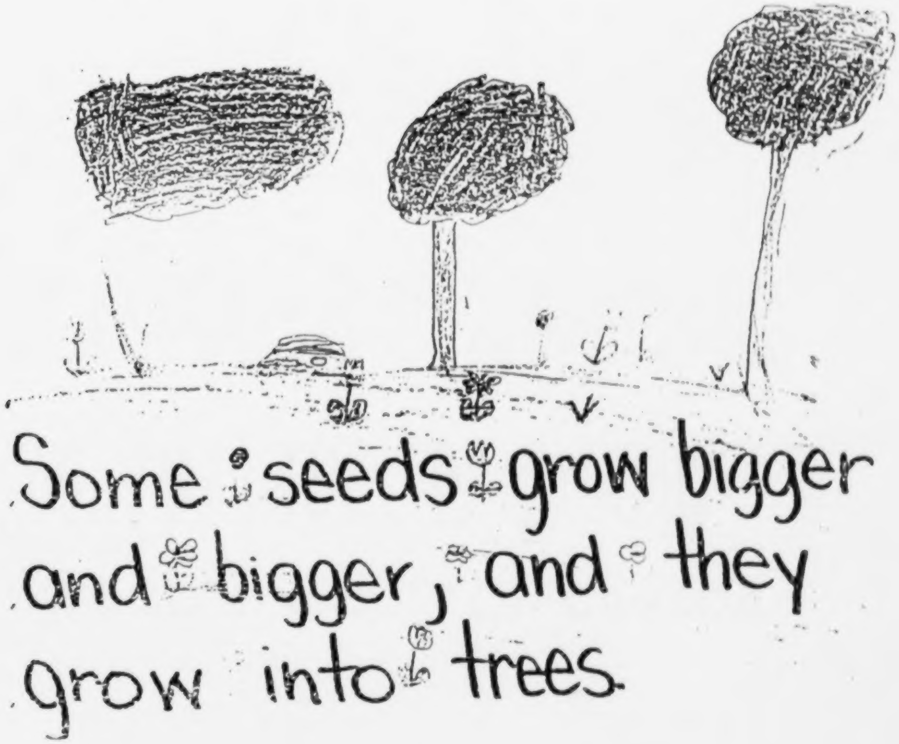
Some Things
are Bigger
than Others. by:

Figure 10: The Final Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story
(p. 1 of 7)



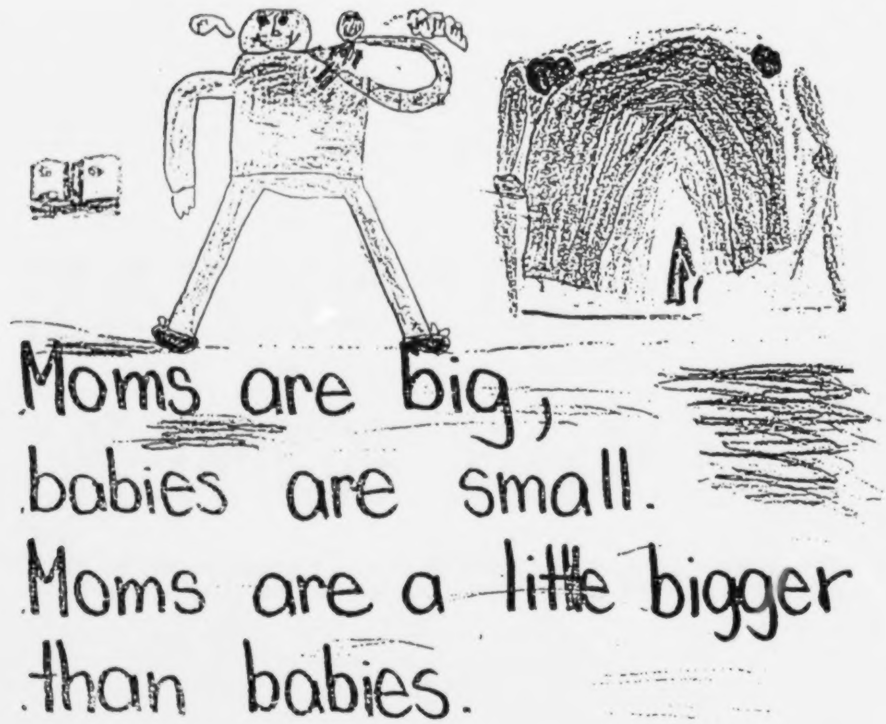
Dinosaurs are big,
fleas are small.
Dinosaurs are much, much
bigger than fleas.

Figure 10: The Final Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story (p. 2 of 7)



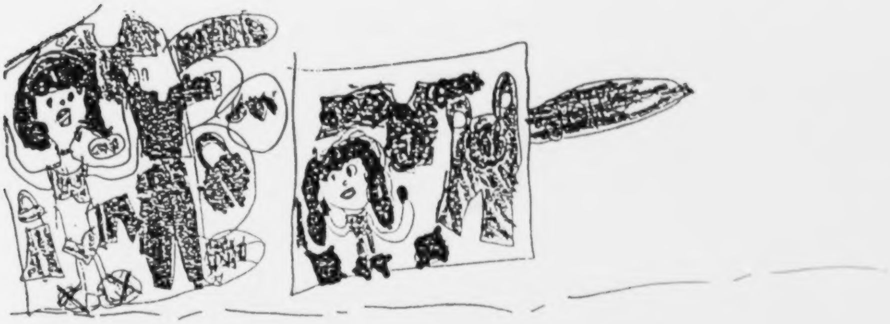
Some seeds grow bigger and bigger, and they grow into trees.

Figure 10: The Final Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story (p. 3 of 7)



Moms are big,
babies are small.
Moms are a ~~little~~ bigger
than babies.

Figure 10: The Final Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story (p. 4 of 7)

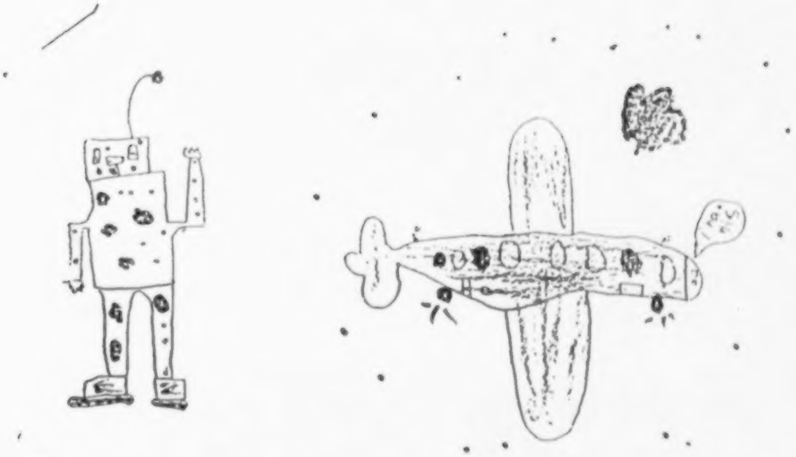


Barbies are small cause
they're Barbie dolls.
Dolls are bigger than
Barbies cause they're stuffed

Figure 10: The Final Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story (p. 5 of 7)

A frog is bigger than a fly. Frogs like eating flies.

Figure 10: The Final Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story (p. 6 of 7)



Planes are much, much bigger than robots.

Figure 10: The Final Draft of the *Some Things Are Bigger than Others* Story (p. 7 of 7)

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APPENDIX A

Outline of Data Collection Phase

Tuesday, April 28, 1992

- First meeting between researcher and teacher.
- Personal journal entry by researcher.

Wednesday, April 29, 1992

- Meeting between researcher and School District personnel. re: permission to conduct research.
- Meeting between researcher, teacher, and school administrator (Principal).
- Permission notes sent home to parents.
- Personal journal entry by researcher.

Friday, May 1, 1992

- Parent permission forms collected.
- Met class for the first time. Practiced video-taping in the classroom; read a story to the class; observed children informally.

Monday, May 4, 1992 - Session One

- First video-taped session of Shared Writing with the teacher and four students. (Sound equipment did not function).
- Written notes recorded by researcher, during session.
- Response Journal entry by teacher following session.
- Personal Journal entry by researcher.

Wednesday, May 6, 1992 - Session Two

- Second video-taped session of Shared Writing.
- Written notes recorded by researcher, during session.
- Response Journal entry by teacher following session.
- Personal Journal entry by researcher.

Thursday, May 7, 1992 - Session Three

- Third video-taped session of Shared Writing (Sound equipment did not function).
- Written notes recorded by researcher, during session.
- Audio-taped reflections on second Shared Writing session.
- Response Journal entry by teacher following Shared Writing session.
- Personal Journal entry by researcher.

Friday, May 8, 1992

- Audio-taped reflections on third Shared Writing session (from my notes and memory, since there was no sound on the video.)
- Response Journal entry by teacher, responding to notes.
- Personal Journal entry by researcher.

Monday, May 11, 1992 - Session Four

- Fourth video-taped Shared Writing session.
- Written notes recorded by researcher, during session.
- Response Journal entry by teacher, following lesson.
- Personal Journal entry by researcher.

Tuesday, May 12, 1992

- Audio-taped reflections on fourth Shared Writing session.
- Response Journal entry by teacher, responding to notes.

Wednesday, May 13, 1992 - Session Five

- Fifth video-taping of sharing with the class and Shared Writing session.
- Written notes recorded by researcher, during session.
- Response Journal entry by teacher, following lesson.

Friday, May 15, 1992

- Audio-taped reflections on fifth Shared Writing session.

Tuesday, May 19, 1992 - Session Six

- Sixth video-taped Shared Writing session.
- Written notes recorded by researcher, during session.
- Response Journal entry by teacher, following lesson.

Wednesday, May 20, 1992

- Audio-taped reflections on sixth Shared Writing session.

Thursday, May 21, 1992 - Session Seven

- Seventh video-taping of sharing with the class and Shared Writing session.
- Written notes recorded by researcher, during session.

Friday, May 22, 1992

- Response Journal entry by teacher, regarding seventh Shared Writing session.
- Audio-taped reflections on seventh Shared Writing session.

Monday, June 1, 1992 - Session Eight

- Eighth video-taped session, of children sharing with the class.
- Response Journal entry by teacher, responding to various notes throughout the journal.

APPENDIX B

Ethical Considerations

Guideline # 1

The research procedures used in the study will not potentially produce any physical or mental harm for any of the participants. The results of the study will increase the teacher's understanding of the shared writing process and his or her role in the process. The results will increase the understanding of other educators and will be of benefit to their students.

Guideline #2

Prior to commencement of the study the researcher will meet personally with the teacher in order to establish an agreement that clarifies obligations and responsibilities. Written consent will be obtained from the parents of the students involved in the study. The consent form is included in this package.

The teacher and the parents of the students will be informed of the opportunity for participants to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The teacher and the students' parents will be informed that the school district research coordinator may be contacted in case of concerns, complaints or consequences.

Permission to enter a particular classroom in a particular school will be obtained through the school district consultants and the school principal.

The teacher will be fully informed of the purposes and aims of the research.

Guideline #3

The participants will remain anonymous throughout the study and within any written reports. Participants and locations will be assigned fictitious names as a safeguard to protect the participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality.

Guideline #4

The researcher is knowledgeable about the recent literature related to the areas of language development and learning, critical theory, and ethnography, as indicated by course work completed with a high standing at the University of Alberta and by the extensive bibliography in the research proposal.

Guideline #5

The study will be carried out under the direction of Dr. Moira F. Juliebö, at the University of Alberta.

APPENDIX C

Permission Letter to Parents of Student Participants

April 30, 1992

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Johnson:

Darren is going to be participating in some shared writing activities with Mrs. Carter as part of the primary program. This approach to teaching children to write is used in many classrooms. However, there is little available research on the interactions that take place between teachers and children during shared writing episodes.

I am a Riverdale substitute teacher and graduate student in elementary language arts at the University of Alberta. As part of my research I plan to gather information on the teacher-student interactions during shared writing activities. The information that I collect will contribute to understanding the teaching and learning of writing.

Both Mrs. Carter and Mr. Tanner have agreed to having Mrs. Carter and some of her students participate in the study. As well, the Riverdale School District has given permission for this research.

I plan to work in Mrs. Carter's classroom over a period of weeks. During the language learning period I plan to videotape and audiotape the shared writing sessions and to record written notes. The video and audio information collected will be completely confidential, the only audience being myself, Mrs. Carter, and my university thesis advisor. The names of the school, the teacher, and your child will be anonymous in all written reports.

You are free to withdraw your child from this research project at any time.

If you desire, a brief written report of some of the study's findings will be available to you following the study.

I would appreciate it if you would fill in the enclosed permission form and return it to the school by (date). If you require further information, you can contact me at 576-0854 or Dr. Marlyn Dale in the Research and Evaluation Department, 572-3977, local 294.

Thank you for your cooperation and support in this endeavour.

Yours truly,

Joanne Melvin

I give my permission for ______________________________ to be recorded during shared writing sessions with Mrs. Carter. I have read and agree to the conditions outlined in the above letter.

Signed

____
(Parent or Guardian)

APPENDIX D

Thank-you Letter to Parents of Student Participants

June 23, 1992

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Johnson,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to observe and record Darren in his classroom during some shared writing sessions with Mrs. Carter. I was able to collect some useful information that will be helpful to me in my Master's research. The sessions were both interesting and enjoyable for me to study.

I believe that Darren enjoyed being a part of the study and was always eager to participate. He was able to spend some valuable time with Mrs. Carter and a small group of peers. He was an enthusiastic group member and obviously liked sharing his ideas. His input during the sessions was helpful in the group's composing of three pieces of writing, namely "The Amazing Cat Seed", "Some Things are Bigger than Others", and "Toys". Darren enjoyed sharing these finished products with the rest of the class and showed an obvious pride in them.

I feel that Darren learned some useful skills with regard to the composing and revising processes of writing. These will help him in his individual writing . As well, he has a new understanding of cooperating in a small group, another skill that will certainly be of benefit to him in the future.

Again, thank you. I hope that Darren and you will have a pleasant summer!

Yours truly,

Mrs. Joanne Melvin

APPENDIX E

Permission Letter from Teacher Participant

May 1, 1992

I agree to participate in Joanne Melvin's research by being video and audiotaped while teaching a small group of children for at least six sessions. I will view and discuss each videotape following each session and keep an ongoing journal, to which Joanne will respond.

I understand that my identity and that of the school will be kept anonymous in future written documents. Furthermore, I agree to keep the students' identities confidential. I understand that the tapes will be viewed only by Joanne and her thesis advisor, Dr. Moira Juliebö.

I am aware that I am in charge of the class during each shared writing session. I am also aware that I may withdraw from this project at any time.

Joanne has agreed to substitute (informally) for me on occasion in order to permit journal writing and to compensate for lost preparation time during our discussions.

Signed,

Mrs. Jill Carter, Teacher
E.Y. McKenzie School
Riverdale School District

APPENDIX F

Statement Sent to Research and Evaluation Department

The Significance of the Study:

This research will take the form of "educative research" and, as such, will produce knowledge of value to the teacher participant, to the researcher, and to the educational community. The teacher will be involved directly throughout the data collection phase of the study and will thereby be more likely to utilize the findings of the study in future teaching practice. The teacher will achieve insights into various dimensions of his or her instruction and changes could result. Theoretical knowledge related to whole language, and in particular to shared writing, will be translated into personal, practical knowledge for the teacher.

The final research report will be of benefit to other educators, in Riverdale schools and beyond. It will provide a critical description, leading to options for teacher behaviour during shared writing implementation. It will also illuminate how a teacher can develop a critically reflective stance, in order to enhance further professional development. By elucidating how one particular teacher made curricular decisions, before and after self-reflection, a model for change and a method for investigating the change process will be developed.

The Research Methodology:

The study will follow a qualitative research design. Data collection will include the following: descriptive field notes, audio tape recordings, and video tape recordings, of teacher-student interactions during shared writing episodes; audio tape recordings of teacher-researcher discussions; personal, reflective journals kept by both teacher and researcher.

The study will continue over a period of weeks, although the exact time frame is undetermined. It is expected that limits on the teacher's time and energy will affect the time frame. However, the data collection phase will not extend past the end of June, 1992.

This study will be a case study of one teacher with a small group of students. The selection of the teacher will be determined by curriculum consultants in the Riverdale School District in conjunction with the researcher. The following criteria will serve as a guide in the selection process: the teacher will agree to be involved actively in the research process and to work collaboratively with the researcher through the data collection phase of the project; the teacher will agree to keep a journal; the teacher will be open to learn and change and be interested in professional development. The students observed in the activities will be from a primary year two classroom. They will be selected by the teacher, in conjunction with the researcher. The students' parents will have given clearance for video and audio recording prior to the study.

In order to insure compatibility and to discuss roles, responsibilities, expectations, time for dialogue, and journaling, the researcher will meet with the teacher once or twice prior to the commencement of the study.

The Research Report:

A final written report will be submitted by the researcher by September, 1993. It will outline the major findings of the study.

This research study is a requirement for the Master of Education degree for Joanne Edith Melvin.

Because the faculty advisor, Dr. M.F. Juliebö, is on a sabbatical leave out of the country, another faculty member, who is familiar with the study, will be providing the signature of approval.